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# IN THE SHADOW OF GOD

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
"THE SPANISH BROTHERS"  
"UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS" ETC.





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**IN THE SHADOW OF GOD.**











"A THEME FOR A POEM."

*Page 200.*

# IN THE SHADOW OF GOD

*SKETCHES OF LIFE IN FRANCE*

*During the Eighteenth Century*

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE SPANISH BROTHERS," "UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS"

ETC. ETC.

"The shadow of a great Rock in a weary land"



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## PREFACE.

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THE two following narratives—pictures of a state of society which has passed away for ever—are offered to the Reader in the confidence that at least they are truthful. The first is in great part, and as far as it relates the story of Majal Désubas, the “Pastor of the Desert,” it is entirely, a record of facts. The second, while directly introducing no historical characters, reflects the men and women of the Old Régime as they acted, thought, suffered. Both especially take note of those who, in that age of corruption and infidelity, lived and walked as “seeing Him who is invisible,” and thus abode “in the shadow of God.”

The Tales have previously appeared in the pages of the *Sunday Magazine* and the *Sunday at Home*.



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**IN THE DESERT.**



## IN THE DESERT.

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### CHAPTER I.

BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY.

"Who rolled the Psalm to wintry skies."

TENNYSON.

THE Eighteenth century had already fulfilled nearly half its eventful course. The tempests that were destined to shake, not thrones and dynasties only, but the whole fabric of social life, were already gathering ; the shadow of their clouds darkened the air, the low muttering of their rising currents was audible, not indistinctly, to the thoughtful ear. Yet, meanwhile, the very sources whence sprang the dangers of the age were its pride, its glory, and its joy. More self-conscious than any that had gone before, it vaunted itself, and chanted its own praises with multitudinous voices more or less harmonious ; calling itself, not without apparent reason, the age of intellect and enlightenment, of science, of mental and social progress, and above all, the age of humanity.

Nevertheless, in the France of Montesquieu and Voltaire, there were districts to which this wonderful age had brought no joyous message—which its voice had no more power to reach than had the murmur of great Paris, far away on her throne of pride amidst her gilded palaces. Such

was the mountainous region of the Cévennes, called “*the Desert*,” the refuge of a proscribed worship, and the home of a persecuted race.

On a lower platform of one of the monarch mountains of the Hautes Cévennes, nigh to a little hamlet called Trèves, there stood in those days a solitary cottage. Its altitude was marked by a chestnut-tree, whose gnarled and twisted trunk was said to be centuries old, and to which its owner pointed with pride as the farthest above the level of the sea in all the district. A footpath only led down the hill to the village, distant about a league, and with no human habitation nearer. Upland slopes, covered with scanty grass, stones, and brushwood, formed the immediate prospect; and beyond them, seeming to pierce the sky, rose the giant peaks of Tanargues, which never, even in the warmest days of summer lost their dazzling crowns of untrodden snow.

The night of the 11th of October, 1745, had closed over the scene. The snow lay thick even on the nearer and lower hills; and the frost had sprinkled the grass before the cottage door and the fading leaves of the chestnut with jewels, soon to be lighted up and kindled into brightness by the cold beams of the full moon, then just rising. The light of that moon was not unwelcome. Groups of figures, of every age and of both sexes, clad in the warmest serge of the district, might be seen toiling up the steep ascent leading from the hamlet to the solitary cottage. This seemed already full, as most of the later arrivals remained without, and contented themselves with lingering about the door. All wore a serious, yet restful air, as waiting to receive and enjoy what they had long and earnestly desired. They looked, even the youngest there, as though they had known few save serious thoughts—anxious, careworn, resolute, stern—not unlike the Covenanters whom Claverhouse dragooned on the hill-sides of Scotland.

This little company were brought thus to meet at the remote dwelling of a leading member of their community, for the purpose of attending an assembly, to be held at some

distance, for the public worship of God, after the only manner possible to the Reformed Church of France in that humane, enlightened age, the eighteenth century. Each and all were well aware of the penalty attached by the laws of their country to the privilege so eagerly sought and welcomed. For a single attendance at such an assembly this penalty was, to every man, the galleys for life ; to every woman, perpetual imprisonment ; to every child under a given age, boy or girl, compulsory separation from their parents, and education in a convent or Catholic college.

Yet, when the opportunity presented itself, might it be truly said of each, that the language of his heart was that of the Psalmist, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.” Yes, from the old man leaning on his staff for very age, who might expect never again to mingle with the assembly on earth, to the little child who was receiving his initiation in the privileges and the perils of the worship in the Desert.

Two women, one aged, the other quite young, with an infant in her arms, were standing near the cottage door, talking.

“We ought soon to be starting,” said the elder. “How I wish people would come in time ! It’s so cold here ! M’amie, you ought to take the little one within doors.”

“He will get no harm, mother ; see how warmly I have wrapped him up. Besides, he is the strongest child of his age in all the parish.”

“What do you intend to call him ?”

“Paul ; after our good elder, Monsieur Paul Plans, who has been a father to us all. Were it not for him, I know not what would have become of us last winter, while my husband was in prison.”

“Your husband, good man ! paid dearly enough for your marriage in the Desert.”\*

\* A marriage or baptism by a Protestant minister, no matter where performed, was said to be “in the desert.” It entailed the severest penalties upon all concerned, and had, besides, no legal value.

"And yet, mother, do you know the first thing he said when set free and come home to us, taking in his arms the little one God had sent us in his absence—'Good wife,' saith he, 'no other but the hand that married us shall, with the help of God, baptize our babe.'"

"Is it, then, our own dear pastor, M. Roux, whom we are to hear to-night?"

"I do not doubt it. But here comes the elder, Père Brissac; let us ask him."

Every Protestant community in those days had its two elders, regularly chosen and appointed. A decree of the Synod rendered this obligatory, under the penalty of not being summoned to the assemblies—assemblies that led directly to the dungeon or the galleys!

As they were speaking, a white-haired man drew near; his wife, also aged, leaning on his arm; and his three daughters, with his youngest and only unmarried son, following.

"Good evening, Monsieur Brissac," said the women.

"Good evening, Madame Bonin. Good evening, Madame Chaumette," replied the old man, removing his cap; such courteous forms being customary amongst these peasants in accosting each other.

"Is M. le Pasteur Roux expected to-night?" asked the elder female.

"Yes; if God brings him to us in safety," Brissac answered. "Is M. Plans within doors?"

"No, monsieur; there he stands yonder, talking to Marie Duclos."

This was the other elder, whose hair was not white but grey—grey with care and toil, rather than with years. It was said in those days that the Cévenol had no childhood. He was born old; at twelve he was a man; at forty he was grey. But the toil-worn face of Paul Plans was kindly, honest, and thoughtful. The cares that sprinkled the head with snow had refined and educated the heart. He was just commanding Marie Duclos, a young and timid girl, to

the companionship of his own daughter, a pretty, demure-looking maiden of about fifteen, when his brother elder stepped up to him, and engaged him in earnest consultation about the proceedings of the night.

"We may be very sure that the hour of rendezvous is not yet past; for here comes Guillaume Vérien, the most punctual lad in the whole country," resumed the young woman holding the infant, as a young man, with pale countenance and high narrow forehead, approached them with rapid footsteps. He saluted those near, but hastened into the house, not speaking to any.

"See now," said Madame Bonin, "there goes a lad, a blessing to his mother, and a credit to us all. Never absent; never late! You may be sure of finding him, when and where you want him, as of finding the church on the hill. Poor boy, how pale he looks! No doubt he sits up at night to read the books they gave him at the parish school. Pity his parents ever let him go there. But the fines are heavy, and every one has not faith and courage such as your good man, m'amie. They say Guillaume would give his right hand to study the law, and be an advocate, or at least a procureur. But who would give him a 'certificate of Catholicity,' even if he were base enough to ask it, which he is not, God be thanked? Ah! he is a good lad—very. I only wish our dear M. Plans' thoughtless scapegrace were such another as Guillaume Vérien!"

"Ah, mother, you must not be too hard on René Plans. I cannot forget how he sought our lost lamb on the mountain last spring; and came of his own accord each day, while my husband was in prison, to cut wood and draw water for us."

"I never knew him go anywhere of his own accord, except to a Christmas mumming. Fine trouble he gave his good father, the year before last, going off with the mummers, and joining in all their godless tricks and follies! But M. Plans made him march back again to every house

where they had been, whether Catholic or Protestant, and return his share of the gifts they received."

"And very right too," Madame Chaumette assented. "But, m'amie, do you remember the lovely gracious child he was, only a few years ago? Like an angel for beauty and for winning ways! And then, the wise things he used to say! All the village had it on their lips, 'The boy will die young, or be a pastor if he grows up.' Ah, that was before his good mother was taken to her rest. What a loss a mother is! But where is the lad to night? That is what I am wondering at, all this time."

Others were wondering too, and becoming increasingly anxious, as the time went on. At length Paul Plans, raising his voice, addressed the company generally: "My friends, have any of you seen aught of my son to-night?"

All gave a negative reply. In answer to inquiries near him, the elder said, "I sent him to Privas, on an errand, four days ago. He could easily have returned a day since. I expected him to-day, at farthest. And he knew well our arrangements. God grant nothing has befallen him!" After a pause he resumed: "Well, my friends, the time is come. Let us, in God's name, be going." Still there was a brief delay, for the elders were careful to ascertain that none had with them anything in the shape of a weapon, as the faithful were strictly forbidden, by their pastors, to go armed to their assemblies.

Then the long procession formed, and wound its way, by rarely trodden mountain paths, to the secret place amongst the hills where was hidden the lonely and secluded glen that night to be consecrated as a temple of the living God. Ever and anon there arose, on the still air of the autumn night, a solemn chant. And as the band drew nearer the place of rendezvous, these chants were caught up, and given back, as if by the echoes of the hills. It was thus that the various groups of Protestants, on their way from different mountain glens and hamlets to the same assembly, were wont to guide, to encourage, and to cheer each other.

But that night those songs of Zion had a prevailing air of sadness. The 51st Psalm was chosen rather than the 103rd ; and a great favourite was the 79th :—

“Oh God, the heathen entered have  
Thine heritage ; by them  
Defiled is Thy house : on heaps  
They laid Jerusalem.”

Or, sometimes, a plaintive strain would rise, setting forth, in quaint unpolished verses that came straight from the people's heart, the sufferings and death of some faithful pastor who had won the martyr's crown. Several of these lays, very touching in their simple beauty, passed from lip to lip in the desert. No seven years' child so dull that he could not repeat or chant them ; no old, man so wise that he could tell by whom or when they were composed.

It was a fast, not a festival, that was to be solemnised that night in the lonely valley of the Cévennes. Thus the joy of meeting once more for the public worship of God was tempered by sad remembrances, proper to the season. The Protestants were about to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes—the close of a brief stormy day of doubtful prosperity, and the beginning of a long night of sorrow, and fear, and hard bondage.

## CHAPTER II.

### AFTER THE ASSEMBLY.

"Hear, Father! hear thy faint afflicted flock  
Cry to Thee from the desert and the rock;  
While those, who seek to slay Thy children, hold  
Blasphemous worship under roofs of gold."

BRYANT.

THE full moon hung high in the silent midnight heaven silvering the jagged contorted peaks of the Cévenne with the same light that shone over the stately palms and fragrant flowers of Eden. Here and there, in the narrow rocky glens, the dark and polished leaves of the evergreen oak gave back the light in glancing fragments of its beams, as did the waters of many a mountain stream, now running swiftly in its downward course, now leaping over its stony bed, and ever and anon throwing back the light from its broken surface, till it reached the plain.

On this autumn night, strange visitors filled one of these usually silent and desolate ravines; strange voices rose to heaven from its solitude. A great multitude—men, women, and little ones—densely packed together, stood, or sat, or lay along the ground; their forms motionless, their faces eagerly looking upwards, and turned to the rocky pulpit where the preacher stood—a dark solitary figure—distinctly seen by all.

The "exercises" had already lasted long; yet they did not grow weary. No man talked to him who sat beside him; no eyelid drooped in slumber; none seemed to feel

the keen frost of that autumn night—"The Word of the Lord was precious in those days."

They had listened, after silent prayer, to the reading of that Word ; had sent the psalm of praise with a thousand voices up to heaven ; and then for one long hour and a quarter, in the still midnight, they hung upon the preacher's lips as he told them how, in the desert, the Master fed the hungry and weary thousands, who were as sheep having no shepherd ; and how He was still the same, furnishing a table in the wilderness with the Bread of Life, for all who came to Him.

Seventeen years had now gone by since Pasteur Jean Roux entered on his mission ; and he had not ceased all that time faithfully to fulfil it; going up and down his native province with the message of life. He was no unauthorised preacher ; he had his education at the Theological Seminary of Lausanne, and had been duly called and set apart for the ministry by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. In popular phraseology, this ordination went by another name—"Qualification for the gallows." For the laws of France—laws that remained on the Statute Book until the very eve of the Revolution—doomed to the gibbet every Protestant minister exercising within the realm any function of his calling. Yet were there found "names," not "a few," of those willing to suffer even this shame for the sake of Christ ; and that of Jean Roux, pastor of the desert church in the Hautes Cévennes, is but taken from amongst a multitude of others—obscure names—which may "never ring through the trumpet of fame" on earth, but shall not miss their own purer fame and brighter glory at "the manifestation of the sons of God."

The sermon over, a few infants were brought forward—amongst them the child of Isabel Chaumette—to receive the simple and solemn rite of Christian Baptism, in the form used by the Reformed Church : after which there followed a prayer, called an ecclesiastical prayer, wherein supplication was made for kings, and for all in authority

(a duty always remembered by the persecuted Church), for persons in affliction, and for the churches in general. At this time, with special reference to the event they had met to commemorate, they entreated that the Lord, "the Eternal," would remove from them the hand of his wrath. "Oh, Lord God of Hosts," they cried, "how long wilt Thou be angry with Thy people that prayeth? Thou feedest them with the bread of tears, and givest them tears to drink in great measure. Turn us again, oh Lord of Hosts, and cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

The prayer not yet concluded, part of the assembly seemed disturbed by the sudden approach of an unexpected arrival. The sensation caused by his appearance was that of fear; those nearest at first imagining that he was a sentinel coming to warn them of approaching danger. But the alarm subsided, and was changed to irritation when the missing son of Paul Plans was recognised; a tall, handsome, dark-eyed youth, the twin brother of the demure Jeannette, to whom, however, he bore no great resemblance. The remarks that greeted him when the prayer had ceased were far from complimentary: "Est-ce toi, jeune étourdi?" (Is it you, young scapegrace?) "What mischief have you been about? Was it not bad enough to grieve and alarm your good father, without frightening us all to death, and making us think the dragoons were upon us? René Plans, you will come to an evil end if you do not mend your ways. You, the son of an elder, and of the best and holiest man in all the country!"

The culprit seemed embarrassed. He looked round for his father, to whom he appeared desirous of excusing himself. But the two elders were near the pastor, assisting in the performance of his functions, and were now preparing to make the collection for the poor, never omitted on these occasions. When questioned by Madame Brissac, he answered thus: "In the inn at Privas I met a very fine young gentleman, an officer of dragoons, who tried to enlist me, though I told him I was under age. He was going to

Alais, and asked me to accompany him, and be his guide. I thought no harm to go with him to Argentière, which was not out of my way ; but he persuaded me to take him farther, a stage or two. I meant to return by a short cut, but unluckily it proved the longest I ever took. That was the delay. I am very sorry." The conversation was interrupted by the collectors, who approached them, bag in hand. Each gave something, even the poorest. Mme. Brissac had two silver crowns in readiness, and René, heedless though he was, had withstood the temptations of the shops of Privas, to keep a livre for the occasion. With it he drew from his pocket, not intentionally, a broad piece of gold, which, when the collector passed, Madame Brissac questioned him about.

" It is not a coin, madame, but a medal, as you see," he said, handing it to her. " The young officer gave it to me as we parted, saying, ' Bring or send it to me if ever you have need of my assistance.' "

" Fine words and fine promises, such as fine gentlemen are lavish of when they want anything from us. I should like to know what your officer of dragoons would do for you if you came into trouble about this night's work ? "

René defended his new friend with youthful ardour. " He would help me," he insisted. " He was a very good comrade, full of kindness and not at all proud. You would have thought so yourself had you met him. I only hope I may see him again some day."

" Did you see any of the sentinels as you passed ? " asked one of Madame Brissac's daughters.

" Yes ; I saw Guillaume Vérien. He told me all was well : but I didn't stay for further parley. I had lost too much of the night's work already."

" Hush ! They are going to dismiss the assembly."

As this was the day of a solemn commemorative fast, the pastor repeated, before the benediction, a brief exhortation, composed for such occasions by the father and restorer of the desert churches, the heroic Antoine Court. Thus he

spake and prayed : " May God engrave upon your hearts and memories the salutary instructions He has been pleased to give you by my ministry, in a manner that shall never be effaced. May God grant that the fast we have celebrated to-day may not be merely an abstinence from food, but a denial of sin, of everything that may destroy us, and kindle the wrath of God against us. May God accept our humiliation, and permit our prayers to reach the throne of his mercy, so that they may cause to fall from his hand the rod He has lifted up to strike us, and obtain for us, and for our afflicted flocks, the riches of his grace, and the influences of his mercy. May God Himself strengthen us by his Spirit, and put his words into our mouth, that we may edify and disarm those who afflict us. May He sanctify and console your hearts ; may He Himself touch, convert, and bless those who persecute his truth without knowing it ; may He give us days of peace and consolation after the days in which we have suffered so many evils ; may He hear the cries and groans of our poor brethren who are prisoners, galley-slaves, exiles, and fugitives, and give them cause for joy and consolation by delivering them from their sufferings. May He, at last, build again the walls of his poor Jerusalem ; fill us with his most precious benediction, and bring us one day to eternal happiness in the palace of his glory. Oh, great God, who art the God of compassion and mercy, have pity on Thy poor dove, on this Thy Zion of France ; soon put an end to her miseries and sufferings, hasten the day of Thy coming, and may the set time of our deliverance be at hand. Lord, Thy servants think upon her stones, and it pitith them to see her in the dust."

The last words were drowned in a prolonged cry of terror, in the rush and noise of flying feet, and more terrible than all, the sound of musketry. The assembly was surprised. Such things happened again and again in those days of peril. The scene that followed is not soon or easily to be described. The groups of worshippers suddenly dispersed—men, women, and children fleeing for

life—scattered themselves over the mountains and through the glens on every side. The soldiers pursued some, and fired; yet they were not anxious for prisoners. The minister alone they desired to secure, for on his head a price of a thousand crowns was set; but the flock, even in this moment of terror, thought of their shepherd's safety before their own.

René's first impulse was to reach his father, or his sister, who was at some distance; but close beside him was poor old Madame Brissac, weak and helpless, separated from her husband and son, both near the pastor, and she alone, with none but terrified women around her. René made this unprotected group his charge. Fear was forgotten, manly strength nerved the boy's arm, and manly courage filled his heart, as he helped, guided, sometimes almost carried one and another, while they trod the steep mountain paths that led towards their home.

Scarcely a word was spoken, save now and then a brief question asked or direction given about the way. At length they began to breathe more freely. No one was pursuing; no one even in sight. Had they exaggerated the danger? If only they could know the safety of fathers, husbands, sons, from whom they were separated! By-and-by they reached a steep descent from a hillside into a ravine, whence a tolerably easy path would lead them back to Trou.

"Not there—not there!" cried René, as one of the party, through inadvertence, was about to take a perilous—almost impracticable—path down the face of the rock. "I will show you an easy way, round by those rocks."

He did so; and they had almost reached the glen below in safety, when a loud cry rang from above through the clear night air.

"René, René!"

All looked up eagerly, and Madame Brissac, recognising through the moonlight the figure of her son, exclaimed, "'Tis Jacques! God be praised! He has escaped, and is come in search of us."

"We are all here, Jacques!" shouted René, cheerfully.  
"Come down to us."

Young Brissac came breathless, as one fleeing for his life; but when he reached them, his face seemed over-spread with death-like paleness.

"What has happened?" exclaimed the women in alarm.  
"The pastor?"

"Safe, thank God!"

"And your father?" asked Madame Brissac, growing pale and faint. "Jacques, speak the truth, for God's sake!"

"My father is safe and well. René, it is yours!"

"What!" cried René, grasping his arm. "Is he taken—or stricken?"

"Not taken, but stricken. He and others made a stand for a parley, to give the pastor time to retreat in safety. The soldiers fired, and a ball struck him in the breast—but he lives."

An exceeding great and bitter cry from the lips of René woke an echo from every rock.

"René! Hush!" said Jacques. "Be strong, and hasten to him. You may be in time even yet."

With the strength of ten, and feet that seemed like wings, René was seen that moment dashing up the face of the rock, which even he would not have dared to try at another time.

"Come down, René; come down! You will never reach the height by that path—come down!" the women shouted, their voices mingling with the scream of the wild birds startled from their nests in the rock. But René did not heed; he did not even hear; and when, by what seemed superhuman strength, he had reached and crowned the summit, he did not even know where to go, though instinctively he dashed at full speed towards the place where the assembly had been held.

He was right. Around the mouth of a cave, near the entrance of the valley, several men were standing. One

came forward, and, taking him by the hand, led him in, without answering the question, "Is he yet living?"

The cave was lighted dimly by a torch of pine-wood, which one was holding near the scene; and by the cold grey dawn now breaking and beginning to steal in. Jeanette was there, still and pale; Père Brissac, too, and other friends from the village. But René saw none, save one white face he knew—yet he did not know, for it was changed. All had been done that love could do. The motionless form had been laid tenderly on a couch, made soft with their own garments; the deep wound staunched, wine and water borne to the pale lips; but all was vain. Death was near—nearer than the nearest now—nearer than René, though kneeling down by his father's side, and taking the cold hand in his, he prayed, "Father, speak—speak to me. Only once more—only one word!" No word, only a pressure of the hand in answer to the voice. No word—from lips silent till the voice from heaven call to awake the dead. Yet One was there—nearer even than Death; One whose word of promise—"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee"—had been pledged, and who doubtless was now present to fulfil it, saying to the parting spirit, "Fear not; I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and of death."

## CHAPTER III.

### TOO LATE.

“ O for one moment of the past,  
To kneel and say, ‘Forgive! ’ ”

THE weeping group who stood around the couch of death had no time to waste in idle lamentations. They must act, and without delay. For the iron hand of persecution reached even the dead. Those blessed words, “after that, they have no more that they can do,” were true of the ransomed spirit, not of the earthly tenement. It was a small thing to refuse the Protestants a resting-place for their dead in consecrated ground. They would have been well content to lay those precious remains in woods, in gardens, in desert places, in the cellars of their houses, could they have preserved them, even thus, from insult and profanation. But over the deathbed of every person out of communion with the Romish Church there hovered the dark shadow of a “process against the memory of the deceased.” If the result proved unfavourable, the survivors were reduced to penury, and the dead exposed to outrages from which the heart recoils.

In a voice broken by emotion, the aged Brissac told Jeannette and René that their friends thought it best to lay their precious treasure near to the spot where he fell—but not adding why.

Both yielded a passive assent, and the mournful task was soon performed. A brief and solemn prayer, offered by Brissac, while tears of genuine sorrow fell from all, formed

the only funeral rite. Then “they left the sleeper with his God to rest,” and went slowly and sadly home.

Some time elapsed before the Protestant villagers of Trou could ascertain how their friends from other places fared that night. Their own “casualties,” not including Paul Plans, were six wounded (half of whom were women) and three prisoners, amongst them Guillaume Vérien, the sentinel. Another sentinel was killed, who belonged to a neighbouring village. The attack had been well planned and skilfully executed; and the approach of the soldiery was not discovered in time to give the alarm. Yet the Protestants knew they could not have been thus surprised, had they not been betrayed; and they feared some member of their own community had been the informer. As yet, however, suspicion only floated vaguely, without settling upon any one with special fixedness.

Sympathy in its warmest, tenderest, and most practical form was shown to the orphan children. The Brissacs took them to their own home, and the old man was as a father to them. Not long afterwards, however, he one day drew René aside, and said, “My son, I would not add to your sorrow, yet you should know that the curé has been making inquiry about your age, and your sister’s also.”

“My age, M. Brissac? What concern is that of his?”

“You are past fourteen, are you not?”

“I am past fifteen.”

“That might not hinder him, or protect you, suppose it entered his head to trouble you. Besides, as you were not baptized in the church, you have no means of proving that you are not still under age, and liable to be treated as being so.”

“Do you mean, monsieur, liable to be taken by force, and sent—I to some Jesuit college, and Jeannette to a convent?” asked René, with evident fear.

“I do,” said M. Brissac. “There are more edicts than one which may be brought to bear upon your case. Your attendance at the assembly would in itself be sufficient to

warrant your arrest. Young as you are, you can rec many instances of those who have thus been carried forcit away."

"How dreadful—for Jeannette!" said René.

"Well-nigh as dreadful for you, my son."

"They should never send me to a Jesuit college, M Brissac. My arm is quite strong enough to earn me a plac at the oar," said René, an ominous light in his dark eyes.

"My poor boy, you have much to learn still," Brissa answered, with a sigh.

Yet René was aroused, by this new alarm, out of : despairing lethargy which seemed settling over him.

"I see," he said, with earnestness and warmth, "I see what we ought to do. I look seventeen, and I am strong. We ought both of us to return home and live together. Our cottage is a lonely one—" (His voice trembled a little.) "There we will be hid, and our enemies may forget to seek for us. Or, if they do, they will find a man and woman, whom they may well despair of forcing into the faith of those that killed their father."

"My son, I believe you are right. We will all help you in the tillage of your field, and any other labour to which your strength may be unequal."

The return to their cottage was a relief to both the orphans. Jeannette was glad to weep undisturbed in the home where every object recalled her father, and brought her some memory of his care and tenderness. Her grief was deep, but "stayed in peace with God and man;" for her nature, though tender and loving, was not passionate, and her faith was simple and strong. Life seemed short, and eternity near, as it often does to the young in days of sorrow: her thoughts dwelt with resignation, even with joy, on the Christian's hope beyond

"That gulf of death, which is not wide."

With René it was otherwise. He did not weep or lament, but he cherished, deep in his heart, a passionate, despairing

sorrow, largely mingled with remorse. He exaggerated his offences, especially the last—that loitering on the homeward way from Privas, for which he could never now receive forgiveness. Often he said within himself, “If only he had spoken to me, I could have borne it.” But he sought no counsel or comfort, and therefore none was given him. It seemed as though one night had changed the thoughtless boy into a sombre, self-contained man, silent and determined ; going about his daily work with manly forethought, but utterly without the spring and energy that should belong to youth.

## CHAPTER IV.

### AT THE GRAVE.

“God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear.”

THE Protestants abstained from pursuing their ordinary avocations on Catholic festivals and saints' days—a prudent and conciliatory practice, enjoined by their synods. On All Saints' Day, therefore, the young Protestants of Trou took advantage of the holiday to bring to the cottage of Jeannette and René a supply of wood for winter firing, prepared it for use, and stored it in the wood-shed. This was not by any means the first mark of sympathy shown to the orphans since their return home. Young Jacques Brissac was particularly active in their service. No day passed in which he did not find his way to the cottage, to offer some gift, or to render some assistance. René and he were good friends ; yet it was scarcely for René's sake that he undertook a walk of six or seven miles as a recreation after his daily work.

René and Jacques were left for a few minutes alone together in the wood-shed, whilst their companions were occupied in sorting and laying up in bags, for winter use, the abundant produce of the chestnut-tree ; and Jeannette was within doors, preparing a meal for the workers.

“René,” said Jacques, glancing round to see that no one else was within hearing. “René, I have something to tell you.”

“What is it, Jacques ?”

" You must guard my secret faithfully. I know—at least I suspect—who earned the curse of Judas, the betrayer. A neighbour of ours, too—a—"

" Hush ! " cried René, interrupting him with sudden vehemence. " I pray you hush ! Breathe not his name in my hearing, Jacques Brissac, lest I should be tempted to kill him. He sold my father to his death ! "

The boy's slight frame was trembling with excitement. Jacques Brissac, himself a stranger to violent emotion, gazed at him in amazement.

" My dear friend," he said, " I had no intention of giving you pain. I can keep my own counsel, of course. Still, what must become, soon or late, the common talk among the faithful cannot fail to reach your ears. You ought to seek the grace of God to keep you from evil and dangerous thoughts. Remember—"

The rest of the sentence was unspoken.

" Breakfast is ready," said Jeannette, standing at the door in her simple black dress, and with her sorrowful young face, which yet, through all its sorrow, showed that sunshine had been there, and might be there again. Perhaps that look pleaded with René more strongly than Jacques Brissac could have done, in favour of gentleness and patience, and such things as make for peace.

" Breakfast is ready," Jeannette repeated. It was long past noon ; but the name was given to any meal less formal than dinner. " M. Jacques, will you have the goodness to come in ? " This was said with somewhat more ceremony than their long and close intimacy seemed to demand. " And René, brother, do come at once. It is scarce kind to leave me to play the host alone."

René sighed heavily, replaced on the pile a piece of wood he had thrown down in his agitation, and silently followed his sister and his friend.

He had sufficient occupation in waiting on his guests, and serving the simple meal of bouilli and chestnuts, with light wine, and a dessert of apples, nuts, and winter pears.

The little company were all young, and they were Frenchmen. Cheerfulness, and even gaiety, soon reigned amongst them ; though sympathy for their hosts kept their mirth within bounds.

At last all were gone ; even Jacques, who discovered that Jeannette's spinning-wheel needed repair ; and, having detached the injured part, carried it off to exercise his skill upon. René then helped his sister to put away the remains of the little feast ; and not until order was restored, and the scrupulous neatness of Jeannette fully satisfied, did he say to her, "I am going to take a walk. Do not wait supper for me."

"Whither are you going ?" she inquired. Instead of answering, he kissed her silently. Then she knew. She watched him with tearful eyes, as he strode rapidly up the hill, until he was hidden from her view.

One spot alone had now any attraction for René Plans. A thick mountain-mist gathered, descended, wrapped him in its folds ; but he did not heed, he only removed his cap, that the tiny drops, like fairy fingers, might touch and cool his burning forehead.

At last the place was reached. René threw himself down on the thick rank grass, mingled with box and rosemary, that covered his father's grave, and gave way to his bitter, passionate sorrow.

Meanwhile another—a traveller, dressed in a peasant's rough grey coat of home-spun serge, and carrying a staff and wallet—came that way ; surely not by accident, since no road to any inhabited place led through the sequestered valley. The elder, Paul Plans, had been a succourer of many ; and amongst those to whom he ministered, often at great risk to himself, one might well be found who would seek out his lonely grave, to pay the tribute of a grateful tear beside it.

On perceiving René, the stranger seemed about to turn away, and withdraw in silence. Had the boy been shedding quiet tears of filial sorrow, he would not have disturbed

him. But he knew sorrow in all its phases and manifestations. The bitter sobs, the gestures, the very attitude of this young mourner, led him to suspect that his was an unresigned, undisciplined heart. He drew near, stooped down, and gently laid his hand upon him. René looked up, startled, confused—then angry, as the fancy crossed his mind that some one from the village had followed him. Who dared disturb him at such a time? But a glance convinced him that this was no face he had ever seen before.

"My child," the stranger said (the French make use of this term in addressing a youth or man), "My child, it is not your father who is lying there."

René half raised himself, and looked again at the speaker. The face bending over him with compassionate interest was still young; but René did not think so, for already thought and toil and suffering had left their traces there. Yet its prevailing expression was peace; not the superficial calm that reigns where conflict has never been, but the deep strong peace that tells of conflict overpast, and victory won. The features were fair and noble; but René only saw that they were those of a man that he could trust. The calm look and quiet eye stilled and subdued his passionate heart, and drew him, unawares, towards this stranger.

He answered sadly, but without anger or sullenness, "Monsieur, I am René Plans. This is my father's grave."

"Yet nothing lies here save the garment, folded up and laid aside when no longer needed. Look up yonder, whither your father has gone to dwell with the Lord he loves."

"I know he is in heaven, but that does not comfort me. I can only feel that he is dead."

"René, your father is not dead."

René did not answer, and the stranger went on, in tones of peculiar tenderness and sweetness, "Do you not know Him who has said, 'He that liveth and believeth on Me shall never die?'"

"All say that; but such words have no meaning for me," said René, bitterly. It was easier to unveil the hidden

darkness and unbelief of his heart to this stranger than to those who had known him from infancy. "He is not dead, they tell us; he sleeps. As if this were sleep! You can arouse the sleeper. If, perchance, you have loitered by the way, and missed good-night and pardon, still you say, 'It will soon be morning; he will awake and speak to me.' But this great gulf of death—not one word ever comes across it! Not one message from the other side! What is there on that other side? We hear nothing when we listen; we see nothing when we look. Nothing but darkness—darkness. Oh, monsieur, death is very terrible!"

"Death is terrible," the stranger acquiesced, and he looked as if he had seen it face to face. "But he that liveth and believeth in Christ shall never die."

"Ah, I remember those words, and I believe them to be true. I know my words are idle, perhaps wicked. My father, I doubt not, is in peace. But I had grieved him. I was wild, thoughtless, forgetful of his wishes. I had disobeyed him, and, to please a fancy of my own, neglected his last command. And now I shall never hear that voice again in words of pardon. Now the grave is between us."

"Eternity is before you," said the stranger. "So live that the seed of his holy teaching and example may bring forth fruit in you a hundredfold; and that will be for his rejoicing in the day of reckoning."

"What if, instead, I stand that day amongst the lost? Fierce thoughts come to me often, as I brood over the treachery and cruelty that cost his life. Sometimes the only thing worth living for seems to be to avenge him. My mother's father was one of the 'Enfans de Dieu,' and we keep hidden at home the sword he used in the war.\* He helped to slay the Abbé Chayla. I have been shown a dark-red spot on that blade—the tyrant's blood. If God has not mercy on me, I shall some day plunge that sword into the heart of the man that betrayed my father

\* The war of the Camisards.

to his death. Then I shall be a murderer, and have my portion with him who was a murderer from the beginning—never with my sainted father.” The boy spoke with fierce energy, pouring forth all that was within him, in one of those sudden bursts of confidence with which the young so often respond to the touch, at the right moment, of a wise and gentle hand.

“ You assume that you ought not to seek revenge; but rather to forgive your enemies, and his, which is harder. How do you know that? ”

“ Who doubts it? ‘ Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us! ’ ”

“ You have been learning the Lord’s Prayer backward; going on to the end ere you know the first word. How does it begin? ”

“ ‘ Our Father which art in heaven,’ ” René repeated, mechanically.

“ Learn that. Say, ‘ our—my’ Father; that word will teach the rest.”

René thought a moment. Then he answered sadly, “ I cannot say ‘ my’ Father. It may be true; but it does not feel true to me.”

“ Look up! The sun is there, over your head.”

“ You mock me, monsieur. The mist is thick; there is no sun to-day.”

“ No sun? How, then, do you see my face—your own hand? My child, these things are a parable. God’s love shines still above us and around, though sin and ignorance, like mists, hide it from our view. Yet we are sure of its presence, for even those earthly things which are the dim reflections of it could never have been at all without it. Suppose you had returned in time to kneel at your father’s feet and ask his pardon, would he have spurned you from him in anger? Nay; your heart answers. He would have opened his arms wide to receive you. And thus——”

A passionate burst of tears from René interrupted his words. The storm had been long repressed, and it was

violent. Many minutes elapsed before the weeper grew calm again. The stranger made no effort to stay his tears. In silence, unbroken save by a few gentle words of sympathy, he waited patiently until they ceased. Then he said, "You do well to weep for the treasure you have lost ; you will find no greater on earth, though your days may be long in the land. But remember, your father's love was but the shadow of his who welcomed the returning prodigal. For 'when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.'"

"I wish," said René, amidst his tears, "I wish He would have compassion, and come to me."

"In that wish," the stranger answered, "He comes. No one ever yet looked up to Him He had not first looked down upon in love. Tell me—for I know you keep sheep on your mountains—is it the lost lamb who seeks the shepherd, or the shepherd who goes to look for the lost lamb? Have you never, even you, gone to seek a poor little helpless wanderer, and found it, weary and famished, perhaps torn and bleeding, caught in the thicket? The moment it saw your face it knew itself found and safe, and had nothing more to do save to let you take it in your arms, lay it on your shoulder, and bring it home rejoicing."

"Pray for me, Monsieur le Pasteur!"

"For you, and with you, if you will," the pastor answered. "Nor could we kneel on holier ground than this."

René prayed his first real prayer that hour. He could never recall the words exactly, often and earnestly though he tried to do so in after-days ; but he felt that they went up straight to the listening ear of a Father in heaven.

When they rose, both were silent for a minute's space ; then René's eyes sparkled with a sudden thought.

"Monsieur le Pasteur," he said, "may I ask you a question?"

"What makes you think I am a pastor?" the stranger asked in his turn.

"Oh ! it is easy to guess that."

"I deny not my office ; and I think I can anticipate your question. You would ask by what right I, a stranger to you, have sought out this place, and come to visit it as the grave of an honoured friend. Sit with me on yonder stone, and I will tell you."

They seated themselves, and the pastor inquired, "Were you aware that your father was one of the elders chosen to represent the church of the Hautes Cévennes, at the general Synod last year ?"

The question was not superfluous. The meetings of the memorable Synod of 1744 were shrouded in so much mystery, that an elder who attended them might well have concealed, even from his children, the true object of his hazardous journey. Yet René was able to answer, "We were fully aware of it, monsieur ; and many of the good men he met there are well known to us, through his description."

"No wonder he loved to enlarge on such a theme," said the pastor with enthusiasm. "I was the youngest in that gathering ; yet I never think to see its like again till I see the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. He was there whom our children's children will honour as the father of the desert churches—Monsieur Antoine Court—who braved the dangers of the long journey from Switzerland, that he might counsel and comfort us in our need. There, too, was our beloved and venerated M. Roger, the apostle of Dauphiné, with the snows of forty years of unwearied labour in his Master's service on his head, where now there rests a still brighter crown of glory—even that of martyrdom."

"My father spoke often of him," said René ; "and we know the story of his death. How glorious it was—how triumphant!"

"It was both," the pastor acquiesced, yet with something of sadness in his tone. "All have not this honour. They whom Christ calls thus to take up his cross, and bear it after Him, draw very near to Him ; they put their feet into his

footprints ; they drink his cup. Their joy in that communion is a mystery, which no man knoweth, save he that receiveth it. But we who follow farther off may thank God for their bright example, and take courage. But," he resumed, after a pause, "it was of your father I meant to speak. In our 'colloquies' his words were few, but ever full of weight, and rich in the wisdom that dwells with prudence. But sometimes it happened that in our social evening gatherings he was won from his reserve, and conversed freely with one and another amongst us. I well remember one conversation, which may be of interest to you now."

"Tell me anything of him, monsieur," said René, earnestly.

"Upon one occasion, when we talked of the sufferings different families had endured for the truth's sake, he told us that no less than three of his name\*—his father and two of his uncles—laid down their lives in that cause on the gibbet or the wheel."

"I knew those tales of martyrdom ere I was six years old," said René. "They were all ministers. It was Paul Plans who was my grandfather. He was executed at Montpellier, with his brother Étienne, in 1692. My father was then an infant."

"Some of us," resumed the pastor, "who knew your father's worth and his wisdom, remarked that he ought himself to have been a minister. He answered, modestly, that he had not the necessary education. 'But,' he added, 'I have an only son at home, a bright, intelligent boy. If God would take him, would consecrate him, and use him in his service, He would fulfil the dearest wish of his servant's heart.' Those were the words I heard him speak, René Plans."

René's eyes filled with tears, and for a space he mused in silence. Then he said, "But that was not, after all, the question I wished to ask you, M. le Pasteur. Where do you intend to sleep to-night?"

\* Pierre, Étienne, and Paul Plans.

"Under God's roof," said the pastor cheerfully, as if the heather was the best couch, and the starry sky the best canopy for a November night. Often had he found no other.

"Nay, monsieur," René eagerly interposed. "I entreat of you, come home with me. You will be quite safe, I assure you. Our cottage is a league from the village, and nearly all the villagers are Protestants. Often has M. Roux slept with us; and more than once, M. Gabriac. Give this joy to my sister and to me, for our father's sake."

None knew better than René how costly might be the hospitality he was proffering. The penalty, for affording a pastor even one night's shelter, was the galleys for life; and the very house, polluted by his presence, must be razed to the ground.

The pastor looked with interest and affection on the bright young face raised pleadingly to his.

"Gladly would I accept your generous offer, René," he said; "but I cannot. I have been summoned in haste across yonder mountains by my friend, M. Gabriac, who lies ill, and unable to attend several assemblies, at which he is expected. Trou is far out of my way; and already I have lost—or at least spent—more time than I can well spare. Now I must hasten onwards. But, René, will you indeed do me a kindness—a great one—albeit at some cost to yourself?"

"Ah, monsieur, how gladly!"

"Have you ever been at St. Argrève, in the Vivarais?"

"I was there with my father two years ago. I know the way."

"Did you see an old farmstead, some three miles from the town—a fair, peaceful spot, lying half hid amidst apple and cherry orchards, in a pleasant valley?"

"I do not remember to have seen it; but I will find it—trust me."

"Ask for Mazel, the farm and dwelling of Jean Meniet, or Larachette. Any one will direct you."

"Yes, monsieur. And then?"

" Give your message to none save to Meniet himself, or to his wife. Say that he whom they expect is hindered from coming to them at this time; but that he will be with them early next month, God willing. By doing this for me, René, you will save my kinsfolk much anxiety. Failing to see or hear from me at the appointed time, they would certainly conclude the worst."

" I never went on an errand with more pleasure. I shall set out this minute."

" Do nothing of the kind," said the pastor, smiling. " You would have to spend a night on the road; whereas, by starting betimes in the morning, you can sleep at Mazel, and return the next day, if, indeed, you escape so soon out of the hands of my brother-in-law, who loves to entertain strangers."

" Are you sure, M. le Pasteur, that they will understand?"

" Quite sure. You can give them my watchword, 'The Lord is my shepherd.' "

He thanked René heartily, then rose, and set his face towards the western hills.

" Let me go with you a little way," pleaded the boy.

" Only to the crown of yonder hill. You must save your strength; the journey you have so kindly undertaken for to-morrow is long."

René, himself an agile, active mountaineer, yet found it hard to keep pace with the young pastor's quick elastic steps. They soon reached the parting spot; and there he paused, and pointing to the scene around them, said, "Look, René!"

Fair was the sight that met their view. The mist no longer clung to the ground, but hung above them, high in air, a heavy canopy of cloud. And not without a break: over their heads, through an ever-widening rift, looked down the glorious Cévenol sky, remarkable for its pure intense blue, as though God meant to show his persecuted children the beauty of the home prepared for them beyond

it. In the west, too, the sun was gaining the victory, and looking forth, like an eye of fire, between the overhanging clouds and the distant hills. Its long parting rays, which left much else in shadow, touched the valley human love and sorrow had consecrated with a fairer light than theirs, kindled the moist and quivering leaves of the evergreen oaks, and rested tenderly on the elder's grave.

"At evening time it shall be light," the pastor said. Then René turned from the glories of earth and sky to gaze with admiration on the fine thoughtful face in which their brightness seemed reflected.

Many things had the pastor of the desert foregone for Christ's sake—home, safety, ease, earthly pleasure, perhaps earthly love ; but there remained to him—

"The beauty, and the wonder, and the power,  
The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,  
Changes, surprises."

And he enjoyed all these intensely, as God's own good gifts to his proscribed and persecuted, yet free and happy servant.

"Let us part in the sunshine, René Plans," he said. "Be thy father thy example ; thy father's God thy trust ; and He will never forsake thee. Au revoir !"

With these words he turned to go ; but in a moment turned again, and, after the simple fashion of his country, embraced the boy.

"Au revoir, M. le Pasteur !" said René. "But when and where ?" he added, mentally.

He stood watching the tall, slight figure as long as it remained visible. While he did so there came back to him, softened by distance, the sweet tones of the psalm with which the pastor beguiled his way :—

"The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want ;  
He makes me down to lie  
In pastures green. He leadeth me  
The quiet waters by."

## CHAPTER V.

### MAZEL.

"The martyr's God has looked kindly down  
On the martyr's orphan son."

UNNUMBERED times had René heard the truths which the wandering Pastor of the Desert told him beside his father's grave. In earliest childhood he had learned by rote, if not by heart, that matchless revelation of Divine love we call the parable of the prodigal son. Yet now its message came to him fresh from the finger of God, as if sent from heaven for no eye, no heart, save his. For myriad years may the beams of a distant sun have travelled through space, yet not till the moment they reach the remote planet which is the world to us does the child of earth exclaim, "Behold! God has made a new star in the sky."

The solitary journey to Mazel gave René leisure to ponder what he had heard. The good seed had fallen into deep furrows, ploughed by the first sorrow of his heart; nor was there wanting the dew from heaven, which alone could make it fruitful.

As the November day closed over him, he found himself at the open gate of the comfortable, substantial farmhouse of Mazel. Nestling amidst its fields and orchards, it seemed the abode of peace and plenty—even of rural wealth and luxury.

Several labourers were lingering about the spacious yard, and a well-dressed man, broad-shouldered and loud-voiced,

with a frank, open countenance, was taking one of them to task, in no measured words, for some neglect or oversight.

"Is that M. Meniet?" René asked a farm lad, who replied by an affirmative nod.

René, waiting till he had done, approached him, and in a low voice said,

"M. Meniet, I have the honour to be the bearer of a message for you."

"Well, my boy, out with it!" the farmer returned, not lowering his voice.

"I had rather speak with you in another place," said René.

"Oh, very well! Come indoors."

As René accompanied Meniet into the house, he said, in an under tone, "My errand is from your brother-in-law, M. le Pasteur."

Meniet's open, good-humoured countenance suddenly assumed a changed appearance, and beamed on René with affectionate delight. Then, with one great hand grasping that of the boy, and the other laid upon his shoulder, he half led, half drew him into the family room.

"He is safe—is he?" he said, softly and inquiringly.

"Safe, monsieur," was the answer.

Then, closing the door carefully behind him, Meniet said to those in the room, "Here is a lad Majal has sent to us with tidings. Speak out, my boy; we are all friends."

René found himself in a room, comfortable and well-furnished. A large fire, heaped with heavy logs of wood, burned in the open grate, and some cooking operation was going forward. Beside the fire sat a grey-haired woman, with keen dark eyes, and a sharp, intelligent face; a spinning-wheel was before her, and a little girl, some ten years old, was helping her to fasten fresh yarn upon it. A boy, much younger—a handsome miniature of his father—was on the ground, sitting before the fire, and playing with a dog. But René's eyes rested longest on the sweet thoughtful face of Meniet's wife, which bore a striking

resemblance to that of her brother, the Pastor of the Desert. She was several years his senior; but his life of toil and hardship had aged him, so that this was not apparent.

"Do you bring any token from him?" she inquired, as she rose to meet René.

"Yes, madame; his watchword, 'The Lord is my Shepherd!'"

Confidence was at once established. On hearing the words the little girl came forward with a beaming face to René, and looked up at him with deep blue eyes, like the pastor's. The little boy gained courage also, and joined the group.

René's message was delivered, and he was forthwith overwhelmed with questions.

What did the pastor say to him? How did he look? Where had they met? with many such like.

Some of these he answered directly; but many things he withheld; for they belonged to himself alone. And having satisfied the anxieties of those who questioned him as far as he could, he added, "He spoke little of himself; but much of God, and of his truth."

"Ah!" said Annette. "Even so. You could not better have described my brother than by these words."

"We owe you a great debt, monsieur, though we do not yet know even your name," said Meniet.

"I am René Plans."

They had heard the story of the elder's death; and their hearts warmed to his orphan son. The kindest hospitality was shown him. For Jean Meniet, as Majal said, loved to entertain strangers; and the stranger who brought welcome tidings surely deserved a double welcome. The best the farmhouse contained was produced, and the resources of a well-managed farm in the South of France might entertain a king, not unworthily.

Sorrowful though René's heart had been, it could not but expand into cheerfulness in such a genial atmosphere. The

last three weeks, which seemed as long as all his former life together, were for the time almost forgotten, as he sat with little Claude on his knee, and Madeleine beside him, telling all he knew to M. Meniet, and listening to his inexhaustible stories of the daring exploits, and hairbreadth escapes, and the holy, self-denying ministrations of him whom they called Majal. This was, properly speaking, a surname ; but, according to the custom of the district, it was used even in family intercourse. The pride and joy of the whole household seemed to centre in Majal. Meanwhile, Annette Meniet moved in and out ; preparing René's chamber, waiting upon every one, and now and then contributing to the conversation a few quiet words which bore evidence of thoughts and feelings deeper than those of her husband.

She was assisted in the duties of the ménage by an elderly woman, of plain appearance, evidently much beloved by the children, who called her Babette. Though treated in every respect as an equal, she was a domestic in fact—not in name, for the Protestants were forbidden by the cruel laws to receive into their houses servants of their own faith.

A far more important member of the household was Madame Larachette, Meniet's aged mother. The habits of French society, which differ somewhat from our own, sanctioned her retaining, over the women and children of the family, the full measure of authority she had possessed during her husband's life, and exacting great obedience and deference from them. She seemed to find the office of the law-giver and the functions of the critic particularly congenial, and was very unsparing in their exercise. René thought her something more, when he heard her venture to blame even Majal, who, she said, had more than once been sadly imprudent, and owed his escape solely to Providence. She advised Annette, admonished the children, made Madeleine apply herself to her knitting, restricted Claude's consumption of " nougat " within reasonable limits, and told his father that he " would ruin that boy

with his over-indulgence," which did not seem wholly improbable.

At last she insisted, much to René's regret, upon breaking up the family party at a comparatively early hour, quoting an old French proverb, to the effect that "he who goes to bed at nine will live to ninety years and nine." In obedience to a sign from her grandmother, little Madeleine brought Ostervald's Bible, and laid it before her father, who read a chapter from the New Testament, with a short, but earnest and reverent prayer; then, with united voices, they sang one of the psalms so dear to the French Protestants.

René was thankful afterwards for that early dismissal. Madame Meniet led him to the guest-chamber; a spacious, comfortable room, with a great four-post bed (itself almost a chamber), hung with arras; the furniture was of dark oak, very solid, and included a carved armchair, a cabinet, and a large mirror.

"Does M. Majal sleep here when he comes to you?" René asked.

"Oh, no! We dare not risk that. This room is too well known, too easy of access, and too difficult to escape from unobserved. Come with me, if you will, and I will show you our *cachette*."

She led René up a flight of stairs, and to the end of a long passage. Then she touched a panel in the wall, apparently not different from the rest; it opened by means of a secret spring, and they entered a small apartment, dimly lighted from above. This prophet's chamber had nearly the same furniture as the Shunamite's, with one addition—a well-filled book-shelf, concealed by the canopy of the simple bed, which Annette pushed aside that René might examine the minister's library.

It contained, besides some books of psalms and sacred songs, the works of Drelincourt and Ostervald, the more learned treatises of Placette and Jaquelot, the eloquent sermons of Claude, and an early volume of Saurin's burning addresses to his fellow exiles at the Hague. One Catholic

book, the Port Royal edition of "Les Pensées de Pascal," had a place in that library, not unfitly, for doubtless its author shall one day sit down with the confessors and martyrs of the Desert at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Her brother's Greek Testament and Hebrew Psalter, Annette explained, he always carried about his person.

René, whose acquirements were very slender, gazed with admiration and awe upon such a store of learning.

"Madame," he said, "may I ask if you also, as well as M. Majal, have read all these learned books?"

"I have read them," she answered. "Some to please myself, the greater number to please him; for he likes to talk with me of what he reads."

She replaced the books, once more concealing them with the bedstead.

"You must not suppose, René," she continued, "that this *cachette* was made for my brother. It was contrived long ago, in the dark days that immediately followed the Revocation, and has sheltered many of Christ's persecuted servants. On one occasion the holy martyr, Claude Brousson, slept here. He baptized the little child of my husband's grandfather, giving him, at his request, his own name, and there has been a Claude in the family ever since. In more recent days, M. Antoine Court took shelter here, when the soldiers were on his track, and a reward of ten thousand crowns was offered for his apprehension. M. Durand, too, and others, have found this a refuge in their time of need."

René looked around him with interest. "How many prayers these walls must have echoed!" he remarked. "Madame, I should like to say mine here."

"To what purpose, my son? Do you think the prayers of those good men stayed in these walls to make them holy? My brother says they went up straight to God's presence-chamber, whence already some have come back laden with blessings, whilst others yet stand waiting, with patient pleading hands stretched out to Him, until He send them

down with an answer of peace. Of such are the many prayers for the deliverance of our Zion, for our country, and for our king, the anointed of God."

"Madame," René asked, "does God ever answer prayers years after they are offered—when those who offered them are in their graves?"

Annette's answer need not be recorded. The heart of the motherless boy turned to her trustingly, as it had turned to her brother beside his father's grave. He talked to her freely, as though he had known her for years. Kindly, sympathising questions led him to speak of his home, of his sister, of their dear unforgotten mother, and even, though with trembling lips, of the father lost so recently. And then "as one whom his mother comforteth," so did she comfort him with words fitly spoken, words not learned, nor wise with worldly wisdom, but full of the wisdom of the heart, which is love, and rich in the learning of the kingdom of heaven, where philosophy stops at the threshold, while faith enters, like a little child, into its Father's dwelling.

That night René lay down to sleep in Madame Meniet's guest-chamber with a happier heart than had been his in the gayest hours of his childhood, now gone for ever. Childhood and youth are not, after all, the best part of life. René already began to see in the future high aims and holy purposes sufficient to outweigh, not the idle pleasures of youth alone, but the brightest honours the world has in store for the successful exertion of maturer years.

## CHAPTER VI.

### TWO PURPOSES.

"Amidst this earthly stir and strife,  
Glows down our wished ideal;  
For wishing moulds in clay, what life  
Carves in the marble real."

LOWELL.

RENÉ insisted on returning home the next day, much to the regret of Meniet, who pressed him to remain with them for at least a week. Annette joined her persuasions to those of her husband, until René, who would very gladly have yielded, were it possible, pleaded the anxiety his prolonged absence would cause his sister—a plea her heart accepted at once. The children clung to him as if he were an old friend. He embraced little Claude, and seemed disposed to take an equally affectionate leave of Madeleine, but modestly contented himself with kissing her hand. His air of grave and tender reverence provoked Meniet to ask him, with a laugh, where he had learned the manners of the Court. René joined in the laugh, but said, gravely enough, to Annette, "Mademoiselle is so like M. le Pasteur, that I feel as if I were saluting him." They supplied him bountifully with provisions for the way, warmly urging him to come again, and bring his sister with him. He promised, willingly.

It was late when he reached Trou. He slept in the village, at the house of M. Brissac; and in the morning

escorted his sister, who had remained there during his absence, to their cottage.

René and Jeannette seemed for the time to have changed characters, or rather to have returned to what had been habitual to each before their great sorrow made the merry-hearted boy grave and silent, and moved the quiet girl to unusual efforts to amuse and cheer him. René told of his reception at Mazel, and described and eulogised each member of the family; dwelling especially upon their love to the pastor, and growing eloquent as he spoke of his self-denying labours and hazardous exploits.

Jeannette's answers were few and brief; she seemed pre-occupied; though René was slow in perceiving it, and continued to talk, for his own enjoyment if not for hers, until they reached their solitary dwelling. He was, however, arrested by her manner when they entered it. Instead of beginning at once to fulfil the duties of an active and notable housekeeper, she sat down and idly folded her hands, without even removing the warm shawl in which she had wrapped herself.

"Is anything the matter?" René asked.

"Well—no. Did you notice, René, how busy the Brissacs seemed this morning?"

"They are always busy. Though, now you remind me, I saw the girls had more needlework than usual. Did they wish you to stay and help them?"

"Not to-day; another time. René, Jacques is going away."

"Oh! Is he? And whither?"

"To Vernoux, to perfect himself as a carpenter."

"I think he is perfect already. Your spinning-wheel is mended to perfection; that chest he made for you could not be improved; and the little table for your work, with the drawer in it, is really beautiful."

"Yet he was never taught. All he knows he learned by himself, watching old Vidal at his work. But Madame Brissac has a brother in Vernoux, a carpenter, and a very

good workman. So Jacques is to go to him, and learn the finer parts of his craft ; that when he returns he may have a shop of his own, and work for all the neighbourhood."

"What a good plan ! How long does he intend to stay in Vernoux ?"

"Oh, he cannot tell yet. Perhaps six months, perhaps a year. A year is a long time."

At sixteen this seems a truism ; and René acquiesced.

Jeannette resumed : "He is to be called M. Lorin's partner, because of the Edict."

She alluded to an Edict which forbade Protestants to receive members of their own communion as servants or apprentices. It was one of many which hampered every movement of their social and domestic life ; and which, together, formed a confused mass of legislation, without method or consistency, but intense and ingenious in cruelty.

Jeannette was not, however, thinking of the Edicts. She continued, with some hesitation and embarrassment, "Brother, Jacques spoke to me last night."

"About what ?" René inquired, innocently.

"How stupid you are ! Boys never understand anything," Jeannette exclaimed, with an air of irritation very unusual to her.

René looked up, surprised. But Jeannette's face, which was grave and full of emotion, showed him that something important had happened : and he said, much more earnestly, "What is it, my sister?"

"Only this," Jeannette answered, playing with the keys in her hand ; "Jacques hopes some day to call you—brother."

"Oh, Jeannette !" he exclaimed, reproachfully. "He might have waited a little longer ere he spoke ; and you, ere you listened !" The hasty words had passed his lips before he knew what he was saying.

Jeannette hid her face ; all was not hope and joy in the heart of the orphan girl. She needed the word of counsel and approval, the loving caress, that there was none now to

give except her only brother ; and he was silent, occupied with self. Jacques was taking from him his one treasure. It was cruel ! It was the rich man, with flocks and herds, taking the poor man's ewe lamb, which ate of his own bread, and drank of his own cup.

"And you are but a child still !" he continued, following his own thought.

"True," said Jeannette. "I am very young. And it is soon—" Her voice faltered—sank. René saw that she was weeping, and, coming to her side, laid his hand gently on her shoulder. For some moments neither spoke ; but at last she gathered strength to say, "He is going away for such a long time ; and he is such a good lad, René."

"Yes," said René, kindly enough, though still rather grudgingly. "He is a good lad. And—perhaps—he will stay a whole year at Vernoux."

A perfectly unselfish brother would have rejoiced that his sister had found a lover so true, a protector so brave, as Jacques Brissac. It was hard for René to do this. In the sad days that followed his father's death his only stay and strength had been to think that Jeannette depended on him for comfort, for protection, even for daily bread. But now a better man than he—one much more respected in their little community—had undertaken the charge, and it would be his no longer. He might do with himself what he pleased. He was no more any one's first concern, nor need any one be his.

His mood was not sorrowful only, but wayward and sullen. Perhaps a lingering jealousy of the steady, industrious Jacques, who had been so often quoted to him as all that an elder's son ought to be, unconsciously sharpened his pain.

To none, save One, did he unveil the thoughts that filled his heart that day. He struggled, but not alone ; for he knew now that he had a Father in heaven ; he had received the kiss of reconciliation, the assurance of his love. Through that love he overcame. The mists of jealous

anger and of selfish pain melted away in its sunshine ; and there was peace.

He was late in returning home that evening. Jeannette had prepared supper, and was watching for him with an anxious heart, when he came in flushed and breathless.

"Am I late ?" he asked. "After I put the sheep in for the night, I ran down to the village to shake hands with Jacques, and wish him joy. I told him," he added, in a lower voice, "that he was getting the best girl in the parish."

Jeannette looked up brightly. "I shall tell him who has the best brother," she whispered, with a warm embrace.

From that moment they understood each other, and were one in heart, though few words passed between them.

Many little circumstances might have prepared René for Jeannette's announcement, had he been observant enough to notice them. She was in her sixteenth year, and Cévennoi maidens were often wooed and won even at an earlier age. The Cévennoi, precocious in everything, loved early, for his tenure of life and its blessings was often brief —always uncertain. His susceptibilities were keen, his family affections strong, and his attachments partook of the intensity and solemn fervour of his religious faith.

René spent the next few weeks in silent, diligent toil. Whenever he had a leisure hour he sought his father's grave; sometimes to weep, always to pray. Not there alone, but as he tended the sheep, as he went about the necessary labours of the field and house, as he lay at night on his pallet of dried grass, the cry arose from his heart, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do."

Gradually a purpose formed within him. It struck its roots, as strong things usually do, in darkness and silence. But a time drew near when it must be told. It would cost him much to tell it ; more, perhaps, than it had cost Jeannette to reveal the secret of her first love.

Rather more than a month after René's visit to Mazel, the brother and sister sat together one evening. Jeannette

was spinning, and René carding wool for her, by the light of a little lamp fed with oil from nuts gathered and pressed by themselves. Suddenly René looked up, and said, "Jeannette, I think I shall go with Jacques, on Wednesday, to Vernoux."

"In the snow?" Jeannette questioned.

"I run no greater risk of being buried in a snowdrift than Jacques," René answered, laughing, "and I should not be so much missed if I were. M. Brissac tells me a great fair is to be held in Vernoux on Friday and Saturday, and advises me to sell a couple of sheep there. The money will be very useful to us just now. You will need some things. Tell me what you want, and I will do my best. I dare say Madame Lorin will help me."

"How thoughtful you have grown, René. Yes, there are a few things we ought to buy." She began the enumeration of their simple wants, taking care to include René's as well as her own, for she feared his lavishing all his slender resources upon her. "But you are not listening," she said at last, noticing his abstracted air.

"I am thinking," René answered, "that I should like to go on from Vernoux to Mazel, and visit the Meniets."

"With all my heart, brother. You have earned a holiday, and I will stay with the Brissacs, or Aimée Brissac can come here."

"Jeannette, Jacques says he does not intend to stay more than six months at Vernoux. And then——"

"Ah, brother," Jeannette interposed, "you need not think of that, as yet. All is so uncertain. Jacques and I have laid our hands in each other's, and promised solemnly before God that, come what may, we will never go to the curé; and God only knows when we can get the pastor, or what there may be to suffer for it afterwards."

"Do not let that trouble thee, sister. M. Brissac is very skilful; he knows how to manage. Have not three of his sons and one of his daughters been married in the desert? And I never heard that there was even a fine to be paid."

"True; but we had quiet days then. Since last year things are changed, and the faithful are harassed and persecuted everywhere. We hear of nothing but fines and imprisonments; men sent to the galleys, and assemblies dispersed by the sword. Jacques says M. Brissac thinks these are the last times, foretold in the Scriptures, and that the end of all things is at hand."

Prudently waiving this question, René said, with a little hesitation, "It is not altogether for my pleasure that I am going to Mazel."

"You have not, surely, found another errand thither?" Jeannette asked in some surprise. "But I am very glad you are going."

This was spoken heartily; for she knew that, since his visit to Mazel, her brother's face had not worn the look of hopeless, uncomforted sorrow that used to wring her heart.

René laid down the wool he was carding, and put a log on the fire, then rose and stood before it, with his face turned away from his sister.

"I must see M. Majal again," he said.

"Shall you find him at Mazel?"

"I shall learn where to find him. I want his counsel and his help."

"Why not rather seek that of our good pastor, M. Roux? He was our father's friend, René. You know he held us both in his arms as infants; and, when we grew older, he taught and catechised us."

"Jeannette, there is no use in reminding me of all that," René interrupted with decision. "I could never speak to M. Roux—nor to M. Brissac." Then, after a pause, and more gently, "Sister, do you remember a day, very long ago, when our mother showed us her father's sword?"

"Indeed, I do. You took it from her, and must needs carry it about. She had much ado to get it out of your hands."

"She told me there was a better sword than that: one

which my father's father had wielded bravely ; and she hoped I would do the same one day."

"She meant the sword of the Spirit—the Word of God," Jeannette said.

"Strange as it may seem, my father had the same thought," René went on with increasing earnestness. "At the Synod he said to M. Majal—or, at least, in his hearing—that it was the dearest wish of his heart that his one son should be—a minister of the gospel."

Jeannette pushed her wheel aside, and gazed at her brother with a look of dismay.

"Dear brother!" she faltered. "Take care, I implore of you, take care. You may deceive yourself."

Those of a man's own household are often the last to recognise his call to an arduous and honourable work, especially if it be one which involves certain danger—probable death.

"Count the cost," Jeannette remonstrated, with trembling lips and tearful eyes. "Think whether you are able for so great a work. It seems to me—forgive me, brother—almost presumptuous."

"Well, perhaps it is. God only knows," René said humbly.

"You have never studied," Jeannette resumed. "You do not love study. Do you think, then, that Messieurs les Pasteurs would give you the 'letters of recommendation,' without which you could not be received as a student at the Academy in Lausanne?"

"I am sure they would not," René answered. "Nor have I any intention of asking them."

"Then what do you mean to do?" asked the wondering Jeannette.

"Go to him who brought me that message from the lips of the dead—entreat him to let me follow him, work for him, serve him like a son ; and, at the same time, learn of him as he learns of Christ."

"René, brother ; may I speak my whole mind to thee?"

"Certainly."

"Then I hope M. Majal—who, to judge by all you have told me, seems very wise and very kind—will bid you wait, and take counsel at the lips of your old and tried friends."

This was reasonable; but reason was not what René wanted just then. He was not able to explain himself, yet he felt instinctively that Majal would understand him.

"I know he will receive me," he said, with confidence. "Nor would you doubt it, if you had seen him and heard his words."

"Then give me one promise, René—that you will abide by his decision, whatever it may be?" said Jeannette, thinking she saw a gleam of hope.

"I give it freely," René answered. "I am ready to obey him in all things. What he commands I will do." A vow of obedience, taken voluntarily and with joyful earnestness, to the hero his heart had chosen.

"I cannot forget," Jeannette resumed, sadly, "that young Morel was sent to the galleys for life, because he followed his uncle, the minister, as you propose to follow M. Majal."

René's dark eyes kindled. "Do you think so poorly of me," he said, "as to suppose me afraid of the galleys?"

"I think very highly of your courage, dear brother," Jeannette said, affectionately. "But something more is needed. A man ought to know the good God very well himself before he undertakes to speak—I say not, to suffer—for Him."

"That is true," René answered gently. "But I am trying to learn."

Both were silent for a time. René, having said all that he thought necessary about his cherished project, shrank from further discussion, and to turn the conversation, presently inquired, "What were you telling me at supper, about the Vériens?"

"They have left the village, and their house is to be

sold. Jacques was thinking of taking it ; the position is so good for a carpenter's shop. But Monsieur and Madame Brissac wish him—wish *us*—to live with them."

"That I know ; for I have been talking with Jacques, and asking him to make this his home, and yours."

"How like you, brother !" said Jeannette, with emotion. "Always kind and generous. But Jacques would not consent to such a plan, nor I. It would be unfair to you."

"Not at all ! What good will the house be to me ? But of course you must do as the Brissacs wish. And now tell me of the Vériens : there seems some mystery."

"A sad one. Jacques suspected, a month ago, what every one knows now, that it was Guillaume Vérien who acted the traitor's part the night that made us orphans. His parents will never lift their heads again. Even the Catholics point the finger of scorn at them."

"Base coward !" René exclaimed. "I could never endure his sly, quiet ways, and his soft step, and keen eyes, always watching everything. He will get the wages of Judas the betrayer, and well has he earned them." He was silent for a minute, then added, more gently, "Let us leave him to God. May He forgive him ! But how has the matter come to light ?"

"Jacques told me that Cordonnier, of Neyrac, who was taken that night, has been released on payment of a fine, through the good offices of his cousin, the consul. He brought tidings that Guillaume is neither in prison nor at the galleys ; but studying the law at Toulouse, with all his expenses paid."

"Too true, then," said René, sorrowfully. "'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.'"

"A good warning that, for all of us," said Jeannette.

"Very," René acquiesced. "But it is also said of some one,—is it not ?—'Yea, and he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand.'"

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE FOREST SANCTUARY.

“He taught me all the mercy, for He showed me all the sin.  
Now, though my lamp was lighted late, there’s One will let me in.”

TENNYSON.

THE snow lay thick upon the mountain paths Jacques and René had to tread. But they were young and strong, and cared little for cold or hardship. In due time they reached Vernoux, where they were hospitably received by Jacques’s uncle, a mechanic named Pierre Lorin, in easy circumstances, and with a grown-up, prosperous family. Lorin’s eldest son, who bore his own name, had recently married the daughter of a magistrate, through whose influence he obtained charge of one of the town gates. His office gave him the use of a good house adjoining the gate, in which he gladly accommodated his parents and his unmarried sisters and brother. But these advantages had been bought by more than one sacrifice of principle. He had been married “in the Church,” having previously gone to confession and made a verbal “abjuration of heresy ;” and he had purchased the “certificate of Catholicity,” without which he could not have held any civil or municipal office. It is true that these compliances left him as much a Protestant as ever in conviction ; but no man can act or utter a series of falsehoods without injury to his moral character. It was a strange position which the State occupied towards the Protestants. At every crisis of their lives she stood before them, one hand full of bribes, the

other armed with the sword, commanding them to speak a lie. "If a ruler hearken unto lies, all his servants will be wicked," says the wise man. What then could rulers expect who demanded lies, and thus sowed broadcast a crop of dragon's teeth?

René, himself in all the ardour of his first love, thought the Lorins, and the other Protestants he met in Vernoux, cold and indifferent. What was then called "Nicodemism," was rife among them, they held their faith "secretly, for fear of the Jews." In almost every act of their lives they compromised their convictions. Marriages and baptisms in the Church were universal: it was said, and not without much plausibility, that they were inevitable.

The fair was over in good time on Saturday; but a merry-making was to follow, and the Lorins entertained their friends who had come in from the country at an early supper, that all might be ready for the festivities of the evening. René would gladly have avoided the fête by continuing his journey to Mazel, but because this would have obliged him to travel on the Sabbath, he deferred his departure until Monday morning. His purchases (including some linen and other matters for Jeannette's modest trousseau) he intended leaving in the care of the Lorins, as he must pass again through Vernoux on his return from Mazel.

He was seated at the supper-table beside Jacques, and talking to him about Jeannette's wishes and his own purchases, when some words, spoken by one of the guests, arrested his attention. "Any other time, my brother," said this man, whom Lorin had evidently been pressing to remain for the fête—"any other time I should be glad to stay. But to-night! Not if you were to give me both your hands full of louis-d'ors fresh from the king's mint. We are all friends here, are we not?—I thought so. Well, messieurs, at sunrise to-morrow an assembly is to be held in the forest, near the great elm-tree. I have promised to take my wife and daughters. And you could not do better than come too, every one of you here present."

Various were the excuses made. Was it unnatural? These men and women, with feelings like our own, preferred spending a December night in sleep, to toiling painfully through forest paths, and standing in wet grass, or ankle-deep in snow; even if the galleys and the dungeon, or such a death as that of Paul Plans, had not loomed in the distance.

But no excuse found favour in the eyes of Étienne Lorin. "Did you but know the joy and comfort you would find, not one of you would hold back," he said. "Of what are you afraid? Of cold? Little you would reck of that with hearts burning within you, like theirs whom our Lord met and talked with by the way. Of weariness? You would soon forget it, thinking of the rest He gives the heavy-laden. Of the dragoons, the prison, and the galleys? Only hear our pastor talk of Him, and to go with Him to prison or to death will seem a light and easy thing."

But his entreaties were in vain; so, bidding farewell to his brother's family, he rose from the table. René rose also, and came to his side. "Monsieur," he said, "I will bear you company, if you will allow me."

"What, my lad? Are you willing to lose the fête?"

"I do not care for it. Indeed I had rather not be there," said René. "On Monday I am going to St. Argrève."

"Very good. Then come with me. Rest to-night by the fire in my cabin; and to-morrow go on to St. Argrève from the place of assembly, which is in your way."

René thankfully accepted the offer, and parted cordially from the Lorins and Jacques Brissac. But as he left Vernoux, in the company of his new friend, the snow clouds loomed darkly above them, and a few flakes began to fall.

"This bodes ill for the night, and the morning too," said Étienne Lorin, wrapping his cloak around him.

"I fear it will thin the assembly," René observed.

"No danger of that. They expect M. Désubas."

"Is he the pastor of whom you spoke just now? I never heard his name."

"That shows you a stranger in the Vivarais. There is not a name so loved in all the country. If prayers and blessings can make rich, M. Désubas has earned enough already for a king's ransom."

"Halte-là, Père Lorin, halte-là, for a friend who would bear you company!" cried a voice behind them. They looked back. A tall young man was following them with rapid, swinging steps, his staff in his hand, and his long hair—tawny as a lion's mane—floating loose behind him.

"Not like you, Père Lorin," said the stranger, "to run away from the town without word or message, leaving your friends to follow as they might."

"Not like you, Jean Desjours, to be left behind by any man," Lorin answered laughing. "I never yet saw you that you were not first—at feast or fight, at play or preaching."

"Do me the justice to observe, M. Lorin, that it is long enough since you saw me at feast, fight, or play. Of what were you talking when I came up?"

"Of what should we talk to-night, Jean Desjours? Here is a young man from the mountains, well-born and one of the faithful, who hears the name of M. Désubas for the first time."

"Is it possible, monsieur?" asked Desjours, courteously raising his cap as he addressed René.

"I come from the Hautes Cévennes, monsieur," René answered.

"There, Jean Desjours!" said Lorin. "You have a fair opportunity for the use of all your eloquence. Two long leagues lie before us. Make the most of them."

"You mock me, Père Lorin. I am not eloquent, I am only an ignorant country lad; scarce able to read and write."

"But ready of speech, as of hand and foot."

"I would use hand and foot far oftener in M. le Pasteur's service, if he would allow me. My tongue is a poor instru-

ment. Still, if your friend cares to hear."—With characteristic hastiness he turned to René,—“Monsieur, I was born yonder, near Brussac. My father—a careful, honest, God-fearing man—had a little vineyard of fine grapes, a few apple-trees, and a good house. But when the fever came, seven or eight years ago, he died ; and my mother followed him to the grave. I was their only child. I mourned them bitterly ; but time passed, and I found comfort. I was a thoughtless, light-hearted lad. I loved a dance or a merry-making : I loved still better to prove my skill at wrestling or archery, or to bait the wild bull from Camargues. I missed no chance of going to an assembly, not for anything I heard, but for the adventure, the danger—it was only a frolic of another kind to me. But by-and-by a new joy came ; a presence without which dance and fête were nothing. All went well with me. Toinette knew, and did not slight my love. She was a Catholic ; but neither of us cared for the difference in religion. I painted and adorned my house, and furnished it comfortably, even daintily—for I meant to bring the fairest bride in the parish to the fairest home. In one hour all was swept away. I was left a desolate outcast, with nothing save my staff and my wallet, to call my own.”

“In one hour !—How was that, Monsieur ?”

“The law did it—the law of the land. My cousin claimed all I had, as my father’s rightful heir. And his claim was legal. My father and my mother had been married ‘in the Desert ;’ and such a marriage is not worth the paper upon which the registry of it is written. In the eye of the law I am nobody.”

“None but a scoundrel would have taken advantage of that,” said René.

“I spared not to say so. And with many a bitter curse, God forgive me ! Every one, Catholic and Protestant, pitied me, and cried shame on Philippe. M. Afforty, the judge of Vernoux, whose office obliged him to put the law into execution, made no secret of his compassion for me,

and his contempt for my cousin. He even referred the matter to the great lawyers of Toulouse, but what could they do? The law was plain. Staff in hand, and not daring to cast a look behind me, I went forth from the door of my father's house. Of course, monsieur, you guess the rest? What could I expect? Toinette was not to blame, nor her parents. They could not give their child to a homeless wanderer. She is in a convent now: every day I ask God to bless her."

"And you? Sorrow might well have overwhelmed you."

"I grew desperate and reckless, ready for any wild work that offered. I had nothing to lose, not even a name. As for my life, that I was willing to fling away, like an apple bitter to the taste. In such mood I attended an assembly. It was the first time M. Désubas, then a young Proposant,\* preached in these parts. 'Here,' thought I, 'is a young man, just my own age; and like me, without home or portion in the world. Though, indeed, the law, which gives me nothing, has the kindness to offer him a halter, and six feet of earth for a malefactor's grave.' I watched him as he rose to speak,—there was peace, even joy, in his face. He was not reckless like me, he looked as though he prized his life as God's good gift, which yet he was willing, any moment, to give back to Him. Then I listened;—and listening, I forgot him! I stood, not in *his* presence, but in God's. Until that hour I had been, with all my thoughtlessness, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, proud of my sufferings and my sacrifices. Was I not one of the faithful, stripped of all I possessed on account of the Faith? Was I not a confessor, at least, if not a martyr?—Before M. Désubas had done speaking, I was the Publican, standing afar off, and crying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' I was miserable;—and yet, in truth, less miserable than when, defying God and man, I boasted my own integrity, and heaped bitter curses upon those who wronged me. My sins wrung my heart as my sorrows had never done; but then it was with

\* A probationary minister.

the living God I had to do,—not with man. There was my comfort.

“I followed the young pastor everywhere, hoping that God would speak to me by his lips again. And He did. Under the quiet stars, in the soft bright midsummer night, M. Désubas told us of the love of Christ, that exceeding great love whereby He came down from Heaven to seek us, gave his own life instead of ours, and brings us back to the Father. And he said that the Father Himself loves us, watches for our return, waits to welcome us home. It was all for me. It was *I* who was loved thus, with a love passing knowledge. From that hour I was no more desolate, no longer sorrowful. What, though I was an outcast and a wanderer, with no name, no portion upon earth, I had a name and a place in my Father's house better than a son's, even an everlasting name that should not be cut off !

“When morning came I was standing under a chestnut tree, alone. I took out my mother's Testament, and with some difficulty found the words that had been the pastor's text—‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.’ I marked them,—with my blood, for I had neither pen nor pencil. I knelt down and thanked God, then I went back to the village singing aloud for joy.”

“And were you not reconciled to Philippe Desjours after that ?” asked Lorin.

“Of course I was. The next time we met I stretched out my hand to him.”

“Very like you, Jean,—always in a hurry.”

“Perhaps so. But, Père Lorin, do you know that Philippe himself is coming to the Prêche to-morrow morning ?”

Desjours made this announcement with an air of triumph, which provoked a jest from Lorin.

“I suppose,” he said, “you expect M. Désubas's eloquence so to touch his heart that he will repent and restore your inheritance.”

"I expect something better:—that he will become a fellow-heir with me of the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

There was an interval of silence, then Lorin said, "Here we are, messieurs"—pointing to a light which shone from a cottage window to guide their footsteps over the snow. They were soon received by Lorin's wife and daughters, who had a bright fire burning and supper ready. Desjours was evidently no stranger there, but a frequent and welcome guest.

After supper the family retired to rest, leaving Desjours and René to keep each other company beside the fire. When they were alone together, Desjours took out his Testament, and showed René the verse marked with blood. That which followed was underlined also, with a pencil. Desjours read the words aloud, "'Ye are my friends,'" adding, "It was M. Majal marked those for me, saying, "'There is your inheritance and portion, and mine too.'"

"M. Majal!" cried René. "Then you know him also."

"Know him! Of whom else have I been talking the whole evening?"

"Of M. Désubas."

"The same. He is Majal, Désubas, or Lubac, on the lips of the faithful. Majal is his family name, Désubas that of his birthplace."

"The very man I am seeking!" René exclaimed in delight. "Can I speak with him, think you, to-morrow after the *Prêche*?"

"Certainly; if you have patience to wait, for there are always many who must needs speak with M. le Pasteur. Let us wait together. I should be in despair if I had to go away without touching his hand."

Long did they talk. Desjours, the elder by ten years, was the chief speaker, though René was not a silent listener. Their theme was the Word of Truth, and still more, him

who brought it ; and they wrought up each other's enthusiasm for it, or rather for him, to a pitch that was perhaps scarcely sober or safe. There is only One who can always discern between the dross and tinsel of youthful feeling, and the pure gold of faith. And it is by fire that He makes the separation.

But at length René slept—the profound and dreamless sleep of youth, which seemed to have lasted but a moment when it was broken by Desjours, who, standing over him lantern in hand, bade him make haste, lest he should be late for the *Prêche*. In an instant he was on his feet. “To-day I shall see M. Majal,” he thought, with rapture.

The little party took a hasty breakfast, and filled their wallets with rye-bread, cheese, and apples, to be eaten after the assembly. Then, with staves and lanterns, they went forth into the profound darkness of a December morning. The snow had been falling all night, was falling still. Their way through the forest would have been difficult to find, even in broad day-light. Lorin, a trained forester, who knew every snow-laden pine and leafless elm as a man knows the friends of his childhood, carefully led the van, his lantern in his hand, and his wife leaning on his arm. Desjours followed, escorting Marie Lorin ; and René brought up the rear with the younger daughter, Jacqueline.

Yet Desjours eventually contrived to make his way to the front, which seemed his natural place. And at last it was he who, in a moment of perplexity, when even Lorin's experience was at fault, cried out joyfully, “Our friends are near ! Listen ; they are singing a psalm.”

It was easy to tell from what direction the sound came, and the party pushed on with renewed courage. Soon Lorin said, “Let us quicken our steps. I fear we are late. The day is breaking.”

The snow had ceased to fall, and the cold blue light of dawn was slowly increasing. René thought, with a shudder, of another daybreak, only two months ago. As they drew near the spot where the congregation was already assembled,

they recognised the words of the song of praise, chanted amidst the snow on that dreary December morning—

“ How lovely is Thy dwelling-place,  
O Lord of Hosts to me,  
The tabernacles of Thy grace,  
How pleasant, Lord, they be ! ”

An accidental clearing in the forest was used as the place of assembly, as it had been on several previous occasions. The crowd was dense when the Lorins arrived. But Desjours succeeded in finding a fallen tree, and spreading his cloak upon it, made a comfortable seat for the women. By this time the psalm was ended.

“ No, you are not late,” the new-comers were assured by those around them. “ The pastor has not yet appeared.”

“ Not yet ? ” Desjours exclaimed. “ That is strange. He is always early.”

Desultory conversation followed amongst friends and relatives, to whom the assembly was a trysting-place. Those who lived at considerable distances from each other, and enjoyed few opportunities of meeting, gladly filled up the intervals of worship with

“ Discursive talk  
From household fountains never dry.”

But René, who knew no one in the crowd, stood apart, watching anxiously for the coming of the pastor. Desjours knew every one, and had numberless greetings to exchange. Yet, ere long, he too became silent and abstracted ; he was growing uneasy at the delay.

At last René drew near the spot where Lorin was standing with some acquaintances. “ Can we have mistaken the hour ? ” he asked him in a low voice.

“ Impossible ! Sunrise was the time fixed upon.”

“ And now the sun has risen. M. Majal is very late.”

“ That is true. Something must have happened to detain him. He may have missed his way. The forest paths are hard to find.”



"Or the snow may have hindered him," suggested a bystander. "I hear some of the roads near St. Argrève are quite impassable."

But this conjecture—which, after all, had been only hazarded to hide a latent, ever-growing uneasiness—was at once rejected as absurd.

"M. Majal did not let the snow hinder him," said a white-haired old man, "when he came up the mountain last winter to visit my son on his death-bed; and after night-fall too, for he dared not venture out in the day. That was weather to talk of, with the bitter wind blowing in your face, and the snow so thick you could scarce see your hand before you. But he said my poor boy's delight, and the comfort God gave him through his words, paid for all. God bless M. le Pasteur! And next to him, God bless the brave lad who was his guide that night—a friend of yours, I think, M. Lorin—one Jean Desjours. Is he here?"

"Yes; he came with me. There he stands yonder, beside that dark slender little man, such a curious contrast to him. M. Plans, that is Philippe Desjours, whose story you heard last night."

"Hush!" said the old man. "Once more they are raising a hymn. I trust it may be a sign that the pastor is coming."

It was the noble Huguenot *Te Deum*, which, swelled by a thousand voices, rolled to Heaven its glorious anthem of praise and prayer. Yet it had not been chosen by the congregation because their hearts were gladdened by the approach of their loved minister, but only because this was the Sabbath morning, and they thought it right to welcome it with a song of thanksgiving.

## CHAPTER VIII.

"THE HOUR IS COME, BUT NOT THE MAN."

"That day his foot on highland heath  
Had trod as free as air ;  
Or I, and all that bore my name,  
Been laid around him there."

THAT Te Deum was never finished. Scarce rose the words,—“When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers,”—in lofty strains and with universal voice to heaven, when a sudden arrest of sound in one quarter, to which instinctively the eyes of all were turned, hushed, in an instant, the ascending peal, and caused silence and panic to overspread the assembled mass. Hearts, ever awake to danger, were stirred to their depths with vague yet profound alarm. Treachery—discovery—the dragoons—each passed in turn through the thoughts of the swaying crowd ; some fled instinctively from the scene of danger towards a place of safety, while others pressed in an opposite direction, and towards a common centre, where a form well-known—a Protestant from a neighbouring village—appeared amongst them. His pale and saddened countenance foretold his tidings, spoken in the brief, ominous words, “He is taken!”

It was a death-knell, prolonged as it passed from lip to lip through the mournful crowd, each one repeating successively, “He is taken!”

At first they refused to believe it. Already Majal had braved and escaped so many dangers, that they thought

him, not unnaturally, the object of God's special protecting care.

"But I have just seen him," insisted the bearer of the mournful tidings, "in the midst of a guard of soldiers, with his hands bound, on the highway to Vernoux. Menet of Mazel was with him ; it was in his house he was taken—last night."

Then there arose, from that great multitude, a voice of weeping and sore lamentation. Strong men sobbed aloud, like the women and little children beside them. Was not the pastor father, son, brother—to all? Not one was there who did not owe him somewhat—many owed him "even their own selves."

At last a low and broken murmur, from feeble, aged lips, was caught up and repeated eagerly, because it expressed what was in the hearts of all. "Let us also go, that we may die with him," sobbed the white-haired Cévennal, whose son he had comforted on his death-bed. "Yes, yes!" men, women, and little children echoed through their tears, "let us go, that we may die with him!"

There was a movement in the crowd, as the strong arm of Jean Desjours cleared a way through the midst. A fine elm-tree had been cut down and hollowed out so as to form a rustic pulpit for the pastor. Upon this the young peasant sprang, and raised his voice so as to be heard by all. "Yes, my brothers," he cried, "let us also go—not to die with him, but to save him from the bitter doom he has braved for our sakes. Is he in the fangs of wild beasts—in the den of lions? Yet we know who shut the mouths of lions, that they did no harm to his servant. Is that arm shortened now? or the pastor less dear to Him than Daniel or Paul? But he is not in the den of lions. He is only in the hands of men—men of like feelings with ourselves—men who know his worth, and the love we bear him. Let us go, therefore, not to fight—for that would grieve him—but to plead for him with tears and prayers; to tell them they may take our lives for his, for we will not live without him, who

is the light of our Israel, God's messenger and minister to us all; and in whom none has ever found occasion or fault, except concerning the law of his God. Who is there among us fearful and faint-hearted—afraid to venture his life in this cause? Let him turn back now, and go from us unblamed; we need him not. And to all the rest, friends and brothers, I give the word—*A Vernoux!*"

"Vernoux! Vernoux!—à Vernoux!" rang through the great assembly, with the electric thrill of a common passion and purpose. Then, as a mighty wave slowly lifts its crested head, and gathering force and volume, rolls with solemn cadence on the shore, so the surge of that vast multitude, bound together by one impulse and one love, rolled along towards the gate of Vernoux.

None forsook the ranks. None thought, "I can well be spared." For what they had in view women and little children were strong as armed men; and the youngest and the weakest there believed that their Lord was suffering that day in His servant, and would miss the feeblest voice if it failed to mingle in the prayer for his release.

René kept with the foremost, near Desjours, the acknowledged leader. Amongst the confused and agitated thoughts that filled his heart were many memories of the happy home at Mazel, where sorrow and desolation were reigning now—of the father's cheerful, generous hospitality, the children's merry play and laughter, and their gentle mother's quiet happiness. But there was one remembrance dearer yet: the pastor's calm face, and the song of trustful confidence with which he beguiled his way towards the sunset hills:

"The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;  
He makes me down to lie  
In pastures green. He leadeth me  
The quiet waters by."

Were green pastures and quiet waters to be found in the dungeon's gloom? Would the God in whom he trusted appear for him and deliver him?

"To-day will decide," thought René, perhaps too hastily. The crowd lost nothing as it rolled onwards; but it received large additions. Every Protestant found along the line of march joined its ranks; and some Catholics did the same. Full tides of emotion overflow and hide the landmarks of creed and caste; and the pastor was sincerely loved by many who did not love his faith.

"Jean Desjours," said one of the new comers, "I have sorrowful tidings for you."

"You can have no tidings I care for now."

"Your friend, Étienne Gourdol, is lying dead—shot through the heart."

Desjours started, and uttered the sacred name, used too freely even by these grave and pious peasants. Gourdol and he had been friends from childhood—rivals, moreover, in those manly games and contests that proved the strength and courage for which both were remarkable.

"What has happened?" he asked.

"Others, beside you and your companions, were found willing to die for the pastor. Gourdol saw him led through Cluac, bound and guarded. He instantly called his friends, they ran after the escort, overtaking it in the wood of Brousse. 'Give us back our pastor!' said Gourdol. 'You shall not have him!' the officer replied. 'But I shall!' cried our brave brother, and, with a lion's spring into the midst of the soldiers, he clasped the pastor in his arms, and dragged him off. But the officer gave the word 'Fire!' The soldiers fired. Gourdol and four others lay dead on the ground. After that it was easy to seize the pastor, and bind him again. He was wounded in the struggle with a bayonet, but he did not seem to heed it. Nor would you, had you seen him, for the sorrow in his face as he looked upon those five."\*

Desjours was surprised into a few tears. "God be with thee, true friend!" he said. "A nobler death could no man wish than thine. Now, as ever, hast thou won the

\* All the incidents in this chapter are strictly historical.

race, and gained the prize from me.—My brothers, let us sing a psalm!"

He began the 80th :

"Hear, Israel's Shepherd! like a flock  
 Thou that dost Joseph guide;  
 Shine forth, O Thou that dost between  
 The cherubims abide.  
 In Ephraim's, and Benjamin's,  
 And in Manasseh's sight,  
 O come, for our salvation  
 Stir up Thy strength and might."

The concluding words—

"Turn us again, O Lord of Hosts,  
 And upon us vouchsafe  
 To make Thy countenance to shine,  
 And so shall we be safe"—

were yet lingering on their lips, when they found themselves at the gate of Vernoux. There they halted. They had no settled plan ; they trusted all to the guidance of God, and to the impulse of the moment.

Presently the judge, M. Afforty, came out to meet them, clad in his robes, and attended by the magistrates of the little town. Desjours assumed the part of spokesman, and began to plead for his pastor's life ; but his strong, simple words were soon drowned in the sobs and wailings of the multitude, more eloquent than speech.

"What you ask cannot be granted," said the judge. "Justice must take its course ; and your minister undergo his punishment. As for yourselves, you must disperse, and that immediately."

Whether M. Afforty's heart was touched or no, mattered not, save to himself. He was the mouth-piece of the law : its voice, not his own, came from his lips.

Against that "cold, strong, passionless" barrier of law the crowd dashed itself in mad revolt. A moment of hesitation, of wavering, of swaying to and fro, looked like a dis-

position to retreat. But it was only the recoil before a fiercer spring. Like a resistless tide the mass swept onwards, bearing in its current all that opposed it. With sobs changed into cries of rage, and prayers into threats of vengeance, the unarmed mixed multitude poured into the town, filled the main street, almost reached the prison, before any one had asked his own heart what he meant to do.

René—still with the foremost, and absorbed in the thought that the prison was before him, and M. Majal there — suddenly became aware that men, and women too, were falling around him. From the windows of the houses the soldiers and Catholic townsmen were firing upon the crowd, densely packed together in the narrow street.

"Come back, come back! Not one of us will be left alive," cried Lorin, overtaking Desjours, and seizing his arm.

At the same moment René felt a sharp pang, and his sleeve was covered with blood. What matter! Nothing less than death should stop him, with that prison wall in sight.

But some one near him fell heavily, without groan or sigh, as if wounded mortally. It was Philippe Desjours, who had kept his place all day beside his injured cousin. Jean Desjours turned, stooped over him, seemed about to raise him.

"Come back, Jean; come back!" Lorin cried once more. "Are you mad?"

Desjours raised his head, and gazed a moment on the prison wall. There was a look in his face such as René had never seen before.

"Yes; we come!" he cried—"to place these in safety, and to find weapons. But God be so with us, in our direst need, as we return and save him yet."

René saw him take his cousin in his arms, and turn towards the gate. He wished to follow, but grew suddenly

faint and sick. The effort to keep pace with his friends, now in full retreat, proved utterly vain. Any support or resting-place, even a door-step or a wall, would be welcome. But everything, save trampled, blood-stained snow, seemed far away. At last he thought the ground itself moved upwards—came to meet him ; and after that, he knew no more.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE MESSAGE.

“ So, no more of this shall be ; heart-blood weighs too heavily,  
And I could not sleep in grave, with the faithful and the brave,  
Piled around and over me.”

E. B. BROWNING.

“ LET him go ! I pray of you, let him go !”  
“ Let him go, rebel ? I arrest him in the king’s  
name !”

These were the first sounds that fell upon the ears of René as he returned to consciousness. Above him stood Jacques Brissac unarmed, vainly contending with a gendarme, who, violently thrusting him from him, struck him with the butt end of his matchlock, and seizing René by the arm dragged him, yet faint and bleeding, to prison.

René was glad to be allowed to throw himself on a rough wooden settle in the guard-room. A fire burned before him, and a group of soldiers stood around it. The gendarme, joining his companions, and pointing to René, said, “ ‘Ce petit jeune homme’ was scarcely worth the trouble of taking.”

“ Why bring him in, then ? ” said one whom René gathered from his dress to be a ‘caporal.’ “ Why bring him in, and exasperate men at whose mercy we may find ourselves by to-morrow night ? ”

“ The saints forbid we should be at their mercy ! ” a third exclaimed. “ Camisard mercy leaves a bitter taste behind it.”

"The saints may forbid it, if they can," another added. "But we have rough work before us. The country is up; and our numbers are——"

"Hush!" said the officer, glancing at René.

"Ay, caporal, he may hear; but he'll not tell."

"Perhaps he may tell M. le Commandant something worth hearing, though. Go and report him, Jean Favre. And, some of you, give him a little brandy, and staunch his wound. You see the lad is faint and pale."

"I am not much hurt," said René, raising himself up, and trying to assume a look of indifference.

He took the cordial, however, though he shrank from the touch of hands red with the blood of his friends. But it was with difficulty he sustained his position; the laughs and jeers of the soldiers irritated him beyond endurance, and the slow minutes dragged wearily along, until deliverance came. A grey-haired jailor entered, in whom, to his great relief, he recognised a friend of the Lorins, and one suspected of a secret "Nicodemism." The official silently led the young prisoner to a small cell, dimly lighted, and furnished with a chair, a table, and a pallet of straw, upon which he bade him lie, and left him, saying he would return shortly.

He did so; bringing lint, linen, and fresh water; an ink-horn, also, with pen and paper. The lint and linen he used first, and to good purpose; so that René felt much relieved.

"The wound is not severe. Your arm will soon serve you as well as ever," he said, in an encouraging voice.

"Ah!" sighed René; "I would it could serve me now."

"Patience, boy—and silence! Think you there is no one here, save yourself, who cannot use his arms as he would?" Then, seating himself at the table, with pen and paper before him, he inquired briefly, "What is your name?" as though he knew it not;—which he did, having met him with the Lorins. "What is your name?"

"René Plans," answered the youth.

"Your age?"  
"Sixteen—not quite."  
"Your place of abode?"  
"Trou, near Tanargues, in the Hautes Cévennes."  
"Your occupation?"  
"Keeping sheep, and tilling the ground."  
"Your religion?"  
"I am a Protestant."

The jailor entered "new Catholic," for there were then, according to the law, no Protestants in France; in all official documents they were styled "new Catholics," or "new converts."

"Your parents," the jailor resumed; "are they living or dead?"

"Both dead."  
"Any relations—brothers or sisters?"  
"One sister."

"You should have thought of her before exposing yourself to this," said the jailor, looking up for a moment. Then, resuming his measured official tone, "What was your object in entering the town with violence and clamour, and in defiance of the law?"

"To plead for the release of M. le Pasteur," answered René with simplicity.

"For the release of M. Désubas, you mean," responded the jailor; "and I shall enter it so. That will do. Can you read and write?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Then look over this paper, and, if correct, affix your signature."

René did so, and inquired, "For whom is this information intended? For the magistrates?"

The question was asked in the hope that it might find its way to Pierre Lorin's father-in-law, who, he knew, would befriend him to the utmost of his ability.

"Magistrates, forsooth!" observed the jailor. "Magistrates and judges are of small account here just now."

Everything goes to M. le Commandant. Messieurs les dragons are everywhere, turning the world upside down for their own pleasure and convenience. One would think they had a beast of prey to guard, or a brigand from the mountains."

"And are they invincible?" René ventured to question.

"Not quite," resumed the jailor; and, lowering his voice, he added, "No one here, Catholic or Protestant, soldier or civilian, doubts that your friends will make good their threats, and, ere to-morrow's sun is down, your minister be free as air. Every one will be glad for his sake, save the villain who betrayed him; and few will pity *him* for the loss of his traitor's reward, or grieve that he is a thousand crowns the poorer." It was not rare for Catholics to express their hatred and contempt for traitors: the very agents of the government sometimes drove from their presence, with abuse and execrations, the men who came to make their legal claim to rewards offered for services such as these. "And there is that poor M. Meniet," the jailor continued, "for whom one's heart bleeds. Is it not hard that a man should go to the galleys because he would not refuse his own wife's brother a morsel of bread and a night's shelter?"

"Can you tell me," asked René, "how many of our people suffered to-day?"

"Not exactly; nearly all the dead and wounded were carried away by their friends. But 'tis said that thirty were killed, and a far larger number wounded."

"Ah! that is terrible. How it will grieve M. le Pasteur!"

"Terrible?" said the jailor. "To-morrow's work will be far more terrible. And we who stand between two fires are in evil case. When your brethren come down from the mountains with weapons in their hands, they will make small distinction between the enemies who fired on them from the windows, and the friends who would have wished them God-speed if they dared."

With these words the jailor withdrew. René rose, and paced his narrow cell in angry impatience. Feverish restlessness and excitement would not allow him to sit still. His imprisonment gave him small concern; for he confidently hoped that the morrow would end it. But he was chafed and vexed at heart to be debarred from taking part in the work—so earnestly coveted—of rescuing the pastor. This empty, idle right hand—could it but grasp his grandfather's sword, the weapon stained with the blood of Chayla! What joy it would give him to renew the heroic struggles and wild vengeance of the “Enfans de Dieu,” of whom he had heard such glorious and wonderful tales in his childhood!

In the course of the evening, food was given him, and he sought intelligence from the warder, but could obtain none. As night drew on, he knelt to pray. Gentler feelings stole over him as he breathed the familiar words, “Our Father, which art in heaven.” They brought him back to his father's grave among the hills, and recalled the holy lessons learned there from him who was now in such sore need and peril. He tried to plead for him, but felt himself unworthy.

In broken slumbers and struggles to control his impatient heart, the almost interminable night wore away. As the day advanced, he heard the sound of footsteps approaching. The door of his cell was unlocked, and the jailor appeared, accompanied by a person in a handsome military undress, whom he introduced with much formality to René, saying, “Monsieur le Commandant!”

René rose and bowed.

“You are René Plans?” said the officer, to which René bowed assent.

“Your youth and inexperience,” continued the speaker, with a manner grave, yet not unkind, “may be pleaded in excuse for your conduct—reckless and seditious, and such as exposes you to the severest penalties of the law. Your minister has pleaded them, and interceded earnestly on

your behalf ; and I have taken on myself the responsibility of your release."

René looked amazed and confounded, not understanding how the pastor, himself a prisoner, and appointed to death, could successfully intercede on his behalf.

"M. Majal desires to see you," said the commandant. "He has asked as a favour, and obtained permission from me, to send a communication to his friends by your hands. Follow me."

René's heart beat violently as he followed the commandant. That he was about to see the face of Majal once more—the face of him for whose life he would joyfully have laid down his own—that each onward step brought him nearer and nearer to that presence—was almost more than he could bear just then.

M. le Commandant led the way to the most retired and strongest part of the prison. They reached the cell ; the warder unlocked, unbarred, and rolled back the massive door, whose heavy grating sound, and the cold, chilling atmosphere of the vaulted room, struck René's heart as though he had been entering the region of the dead.

Majal was seated at the table ; his feet were fettered, but his hands free ; while a loose overcoat, covering his body, concealed the traces of his wound.

He rose as they entered the cell, and bowed to the commandant. Even through the gloom, that fair young face shone, as though touched by the finger of God, with a grace and beauty of which the memory lingers still in legend and popular song. There was no fear there, no apprehension ; only a profound and patient sorrow. He looked like one who had been gazing all night upon some dear, dead face. Perhaps he had been weeping—such tears as brave men weep unblamed—for others. To Majal it seemed natural and right that the shepherd should give his life for the sheep. But that the sheep should die for the shepherd seemed a strange thing—a bitter, unexpected anguish.

"Here, monsieur," said the commandant, after a pause, "is the lad for whom you interceded. You desire to speak with him?"

"I thank you, M. le Commandant," said the pastor, extending his hand to René, who raised it to his lips. "And you, too, have suffered!" he added, with a quick glance at the wounded arm.

"The hurt is nothing, monsieur," René said quickly, regretting it for the first time that moment.

"M. le Commandant has generously promised to set you at liberty," the pastor resumed. "This is a joy to me, René. Once before you faithfully performed an errand for me. Will you do as much again?"

"With my whole heart, monsieur!"

"You promise, in God's hearing?"

René was grieved by the doubt this insistence seemed to imply. "You may trust me, monsieur," he said, his voice trembling with emotion.

"I do trust you—unto death. To you I give the task of bearing to those who love me my last earnest entreaty. It is written here." He gave him a slip of paper, carefully folded. As René took it, an icy dart of apprehension thrilled his heart. Why this solemn charge—that strange word "last?" Did he not know they would save him to-morrow? Half unconsciously he made a motion as though to look at the paper; but Majal placed his hand on his. "Not now," he said gently. "Wait till you are free. One word more, René. Bear my greeting to the dear friends who have done and dared so much for me. Tell them He will recompense them who has said, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.' Ask them to pray for us, and to care for my sister and her children. Now, farewell. Go in peace, dear boy." He looked at him a moment, wistfully—almost sadly—as though he would have said more; but they were not alone. M. le Commandant de Davèze, though a courteous gentleman, was a stern soldier, and

could not allow a moment's unwitnessed intercourse to the friends. Then, turning to Davèze, he said, "M. le Com' mandant, my friend may go forth now, may he not?"

"Certainly, monsieur; he shall be released immediately. But he must give his parole that from this time forward he will behave peaceably, and submit himself to the laws."

Nothing could be farther from René's desire than to give such a promise, since he intended, the moment he left the town, to prepare for an armed resistance to the laws. He hesitated; but the pastor said, looking at him kindly, "I will answer for him."

"That is quite sufficient, monsieur," returned Davèze, courteously. "Now, my lad," he added, "the warder waits. He will conduct you to the gate, and you can rejoin your friends."

Believing that the morrow would reunite them, René would have been content with a grateful farewell look, and an "au revoir" spoken in his heart to the pastor. But Majal drew him towards him, embraced him, and kissed him lip to lip. "There is the seal of thy commission," he said. "God go with thee, my son."

René's apprehensions returned. Was this the parting of those who should meet on the morrow? Did some terrible, unknown sorrow lie before them? But he dared not speak; a strong spell seemed laid upon him, a solemn reverent awe filled his soul. Davèze motioned him quickly out of the cell, and he obeyed without a word.

Davèze himself turned back, and closed the door. The soldier was silent now; it was the gentleman—nay, the man—who spoke, and from a generous impulse. His honour, in the world's estimation, would be tarnished if his captive were torn from him; but might there not be better things even than honour? "M. Majal," he said, "I have permitted you to do this thing; but I neither like nor approve it. I tell you frankly, it gives me no pleasure to see a brave man put his neck in the halter. You save us trouble and danger; but you throw your own life away.

Be advised : recall your messenger (I give you leave—nay, I desire it) ; destroy your note ; and let the God of battles decide your fate to-morrow."

A bright, almost triumphant smile lit up the captive's noble countenance. "The God of peace shall decide," he said. "There shall no more blood be shed for me."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE MESSENGER.

" My lips were sealed, I think, by his  
To words of truth and uprightness."

E. B. BROWNING.

" **M**Y friends, I implore of you to withdraw. The king's men are here in great numbers. Only too much blood has been shed already. I am in peace; and entirely resigned to the will of God.

" (Signed) MAJAL-DÉSUBAS."

These were the words René read when he opened the pastor's note. Stunned and bewildered, he repeated, "'Implore of you to withdraw!' Impossible! 'The king's men here in great numbers.' Our's are greater a hundredfold! 'Too much blood shed already.' Not for *him*! I cannot bear that message—I will not!"

A fierce temptation swept over him like a whirlwind. He would keep silence, and destroy that fatal paper. M. Majal should yet be saved.

He seized the note to tear it. The concluding words met his eye and stayed his hand. "In peace.—Entirely resigned to the will of God." The will of God! Dare he resist that?

He threw himself on the snowy ground, and fought his battle out alone. "I cannot do it, and seal his death-warrant with my own hand!" he cried aloud in his anguish.

But the touch of Majal's lips yet lingered upon his. He saw his look ; he heard his words, "I do trust you unto death." In his sore need he "cried to the Strong for strength." And not in vain. God helped him, and he was faithful to the pastor's trust that day. Fearing to allow himself time for thought, he sprang to his feet and hurried into the midst of the excited multitude that thronged all the approaches to the little town.

The crowd had multiplied fourfold since the previous day, and fresh bands were still arriving. All had arms, of some kind. Here and there was an antique sword that, like René's, had done service in the Camisard war ; a pistol, a match-lock, or a pike. But scythes, reaping-hooks, and stout staves shod with iron, were far more numerous ; and there was many a specimen of the primitive weapon with which David slew Goliath, still formidable as ever in a skilful hand. Everywhere the wintry sun shone upon stern, determined faces ; the hardy mountaineers were burning to rescue their pastor and to revenge their brethren.

It was a terrible experiment René had to make—to weigh the power of the pastor's word against the value of the pastor's life. That word was so powerful ! But then, that life was so precious !

He had not courage to confront Desjours, and tell his tale to him. He saw him moving to and fro amongst the new arrivals, exhorting and encouraging them, examining their arms—almost drilling them. Whom should he accost in the first instance ? How should he gain a hearing ? Had he been permitted even a minute's unwitnessed intercourse with Majal, the pastor would have told him what to do, in whom to confidé. But, in the presence of Davèze, this would have been dangerous. It had been necessary to leave the messenger to his own discretion ; to trust him entirely ; and it was the thought that Majal had so trusted him that nerved him for his task.

While he paused in perplexity, deliberating upon the course he ought to take, he recognised—to his great surprise

and comfort—a familiar face. Making his way through the crowd, he stood in the presence of M. Jean Roux, the pastor who had baptized, catechised, and instructed him.

He was a man of middle age, with a florid countenance, very dark eyes, and a peculiarly quick lively manner. Engaged in earnest consultation with him was a young man whom René knew at once to be a pastor, though he wore the dress of a peasant. He was small in stature, lean and emaciated, with a long, thin, sunburnt face, regular features, black hair, and black eyes full of fire and intelligence.\* He seemed to be urging some course of action, with great energy, upon M. Roux, when René drew near.

"M. le Pasteur," said he, "I have something to tell you."

"What brings *you* here, René Plans?" the pastor inquired, hastily. "This is no place—no work for you. Go home; take care of your orphan sister, and keep out of mischief."

But as he looked on the boy's face, he could not but notice its altered expression. Though it bore the trace of recent tears, it was determined, manly, full of quiet resolution. "M. le Pasteur," he said, "I was taken prisoner yesterday in the town. Last night I spent in the dungeon; and this morning I saw *him*."

As he said this, the dark eyes of the younger pastor flashed such a keen look of inquiry upon him that he was well-nigh disconcerted. "And how was that permitted?" he asked, almost sharply.

"It was M. le Commandant himself brought me to him, and was present all the time," René answered. "He had his own reasons for granting the favour," he added, bitterly; "as you will say, messieurs, when you read this;" and he put Majal's note into the hand of M. Roux.

Both bent over it; and for a time both were silent. The young pastor spoke at last. "God be thanked; He has made a way of escape for us," he said. "But our noble,

\* These pastors are described from their "signalement," which was in the hands of the police; like the photographs of notorious criminals in our day.

heroic brother——” Unable to add more, he turned away his face, and wept.

“Thank God! we are all saved now!” Roux ejaculated, fervently. He then addressed a few brief questions to René, who, in answer, related what had passed between him and the captive.

“Come, M. Rabaut,” he said, almost impatiently. “Let us make use of the help God has sent us in our need. There is not a moment to spare. All is lost if our people enter the town and break the peace again.”

René, in his heart, almost hated the pastors. He thought, with a bitter, jealous pang, of him whom they were so calmly leaving to die, while they profited by his self-sacrifice. “They care only for themselves,” he said, “and *he* cared only for them and for us all.”

He was cruelly unjust to them. If they accepted the sacrifice easily and naturally, it was because they so well understood him who made it. In his place, they might have done as he did. With them, as with him, the highest acts of heroism were common every-day duties.

“None will doubt that the note is Majal’s,” said Rabaut, the fire of his dark eyes softening into tenderness. “All his modest, calm simplicity is there. His words burn only when he speaks for his Lord.”

Roux was already on his way to the scene of action. Rabaut, about to follow his eager companion, paused a moment, struck by the sorrow in the face of Majal’s young messenger.

“And you, in whom he confided thus—you love him well?” he said.

“Who does not?” cried René. “Yet we must abandon him—must leave him to that death! It is terrible—heart-breaking!”

“It matters little whether thy heart and mine are broken,” the pastor of the Desert quietly rejoined; “but it matters much, for thee and me, whether we be found doing the will of God, who liveth and abideth for ever.”

"It is hard that he should bear the cross for us all!"

"Would you not gladly bear it for him, if you might?"

"Ah! would I not? Ten thousand times, if I could, and many—many there would be to envy me, and dispute the glory and the joy!"

"Then read his heart by your own. Do not grudge him the glory and the joy of bearing that cross for One he loves more than you understand, and who loves him more than he understands, even now."

Having said thus, he turned away, and was soon in the midst of the excited crowd. Well did he, and Pasteur Roux, and others who joined them later, fulfil their mournful but noble task. The captive's note was passed from hand to hand, and the prayers of his brethren added to his that no man's blood should be shed for him that day. "Leave him," they urged with all the fervour of their eloquence,—"in the hands of his God. There he desires to be, and there it is well with him."

With these, and many more like words, "scarce restrained they the people." The storm-clouds, charged with electric fluid, hung their threatening masses heavily in air, and ever and anon the low mutterings of the thunder were heard; but the lightnings did not leap forth, or the rain sweep down in a devastating torrent.

The peace was kept, and the sword, half drawn, restored to its sheath; because the captive pastor, "a martyr to mercy as well as to truth," calmly and firmly put aside a deliverance to be bought only with the blood of his people.\* Nor was the work his alone. Each one of the pastors who interposed to restrain the excited multitude, did so with his life in his hand. Over him also hung the terrible doom from which he forbade his flock to rescue his heroic brother. They were no ordinary men who acted such a part; and who even, with noble frankness and humility, wrote to the Commandant of Vernoux in excuse for what

\* There is no doubt Désubas would have been rescued, but for his own interference, as related above.

had already happened: "We are very sorry, but we could not prevent it, as we were then at a distance. We will do all that depends upon us to provide that none of our people shall appear in arms henceforward." Such were the men whom the laws of their country doomed to the gibbet.

One of the youngest of their company wrote, shortly afterwards, to an agent of the government: "I am not ignorant to what I expose myself; I look upon myself as a victim devoted to death. But though I am aware of the precautions taken to arrest me, you shall never see me make use of violent means to preserve my life." These were the words of Paul Rabaut, the most illustrious and distinguished pastor of the Desert church, and for many years, in fact though not in name, captain of the devoted band. The representative men of "the Church under the cross" were, for the earlier years of the eighteenth century, Antoine Court; for the later, Paul Rabaut. Both could truly say, with the great apostle, "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat."

Out of the latent scepticism and the "nil admirari" spirit of the present day has arisen a theory on the subject of martyrs, which finds too easy acceptance even with some who should be better informed. We are told they suffered, not for their religious opinions, but as rebels against the governments under which they lived. The assertion is plausible; but history refutes it with ten thousand voices. The witness of the primitive church, which ever "rendered unto Cæsar the things which were Cæsar's," and which no persecution provoked to any act of vindictive violence, ought to be sufficient. But the latest, in order of time, confirm the testimony of the earliest. The long and noble line of martyred Pastors of the Desert (not completed until the eve of our own generation) rises up before us to proclaim that it was for the Faith they held and preached, and for that alone, that they—men of peace, loyal subjects, friends of order—laid down their lives.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE LAST LOOK.

"No longer stoops that captive's brow,  
His form erect in majesty;  
His pale cheek lighted with the glow  
Of one who sees deliverance nigh."

THE pastors were energetic and eloquent ; their power over the hearts of the people was almost unbounded. Yet the work they had now undertaken taxed their resources to the uttermost. They had to hold back an armed exasperated multitude, hourly increased by fresh arrivals, as a hound in leash is held by his master's hand from springing on his prey.

They could control the excited crowds ; but they could not disperse them. All their influence did not avail to send them back to their homes and their ordinary avocations. They still lingered around Vernoux, and thronged the highways leading southwards ; not now to rescue their hero, only to see him once more, and to bless and pray for him on his way to death.

René Plans remained, with Jean Desjours and Étienne Lorin. Philippe Desjours, who was severely wounded, had been taken home. Amongst the slain was the old man whose lips had been the first to murmur, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." He had his wish, and more. He died, if not with the pastor, for him and before him.

The calm and prudent Jacques Brissac volunteered to return to Trou, that he might allay the anxieties of his

#### *THE LAST LOOK.*

parents and Jeannette, who would be sure to hear confused and exaggerated reports of the late events. Before they parted, René confided to him a plan upon which he had set his heart, and in which his assistance and that of Jeannette would be useful.

Jacques warmly approved it. "It is an excellent thought," he said. "You may depend on our help, René. You see how soon God has shown you what to do with your father's house."

A much larger force than M. de Davèze had at command was necessary to remove the captive, with safety, from Vernoux. He sent an express to Montpellier for fresh troops, and waited anxiously for their arrival; so did the multitude outside the town, who knew it would be the signal for their pastor to begin his mournful journey. This interval René spent chiefly in the society of Desjours and Lorin.

Lorin was sorrowful, but resigned. "God is good," he said; "and it is the will of God." The strong, simple faith of these sons of the Desert leaned much for support upon that "will of God," by which they understood the everlasting and immutable purpose of Him whom they loved to call "the Eternal." They were not fatalists; but they were Predestinarians, of the school of Calvin. To the Divine decrees, whether these required the sacrifice of their pastor's life or of their own, no reply was possible, except, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good."

Desjours was far from sharing the resignation of his older and calmer friend. He was, in Scripture phraseology, a man "bitter of soul." He heaped execrations upon the heads of the persecutors; he blamed every one—René, for bearing the message; the pastors for listening to it; Majal even, for sending it. He was a genuine child of the south, fierce and fiery like the southern sun. His strong undisciplined nature was capable of much good, but of much evil also. Good and evil had contended for him, and the evil had well-nigh gained the victory, and marred his whole life,

when, in God's providence, the Word, and the man who preached it, together found entrance to his heart: old things passed away, and all things became new. He never learned to discriminate between the message and the messenger. His "soul was knit" to Majal, his equal in age, though immeasurably his superior in all else; his love for him was a passion, partaking of the tenderness of a brother and the grateful reverence of a spiritual son. The serene and lofty nature exercised an absolute sway over the ardent, turbulent one. And now, when left without Majal, Desjours was like a ship without compass and without anchor.

Nor did he, in his bitter sorrow, find more comfort in looking up than in looking around. His soul for a time forgot its resting-place, and no ray of hope and trust struggled through the chill mist that enwrapped him. Even René, whose own faith was often weak, pitied his deep dejection, and sought to soothe him.

Days passed by; long, weary days to all; for there was nothing left to do. At last the soldiers came. Eager crowds thronged the highway that led from Vernoux to Privas, in silent, anxious expectation of that for which they had waited. René and Desjours had secured a good position, and were standing together, when Étienne Lorin (who had spent the previous night in the town with his brother) came up to them, and, with a face of grave concern, beckoned Desjours apart. René followed.

"My friend," said Lorin, in a low voice, and with a hasty glance around for fear of listeners, "you are in great danger. Fly! Lose not an hour! Find shelter where you may; only put ten good leagues between yourself and the town ere nightfall."

"Why? What is the matter?" asked Desjours, without apparent emotion.

"Enough, and to spare," Lorin answered. "A warrant is out for your apprehension, as the leader of the disorderly crowd that forced their way into the town; and a price of a thousand livres is set upon your head!"

"Oh! is that all?" said Desjours, with a bitter laugh. "I am very much obliged to the magistrates, and entirely at their disposal."

His words jarred upon the ear of René, who was in a tender, reverent mood, as one about to take part in some solemn sacrament. And Lorin said, "Truly, I sometimes think you are beside yourself, Jean Desjours."

"Why so, Père Lorin? What better could befall me than to be taken now? They would send me to Montpellier. Fifty long leagues, side by side with *him!* Only think of that! After such joy, they are welcome to hang me."

"Hush!" said Lorin. "Are these words for a Christian man to speak? Is your life your own, to fling away,—or were you bought with a price, Jean Desjours? Was M. Majal crucified for you? You are a worse idolater than the poor ignorant Catholics. Never Papist put saint or Virgin more plainly in Christ's place than you are putting him. And true words were those he once spoke to us: 'The cruellest wrong you can do the thing you love—be it husband, wife, or child—is to make an idol thereof. It hurts less to be scorned and hated than to be worshipped.' Is it because you think enough has not been done to break his heart that you must needs add another victim to the rest? Have mercy, if not on him, at least on us, whose honour he has to maintain, by a calm and dauntless bearing to the end." This was a long speech for Lorin, and he stopped suddenly, as if half-ashamed of his earnestness. But a moment afterwards he resumed, sadly, "Not that you alone are to blame, Jean Desjours. We have all needed the rebuke, 'Who is Paul, and who is Apollos?' Perhaps that is why God has laid his hand on our noblest and best-beloved."

"Quick! quick!" cried a boy, running towards them. "Here they are! Here come the soldiers!"

René darted off at full speed. Desjours would have done so too, but Lorin held him back.

"For God's sake, be prudent!" he said. "Deny yourself a useless, perilous pleasure. You will see his face again. You know it?—do you not?"

"Let me go, Lorin. I must see him, though I die for it!"

He shook off the detaining hand, and, followed by Lorin, hastened towards the highway.

From the early morning, every window in the long main street of the little town had been filled with gazers to see the captives pass. There were several. Two or three of the companions of Étienne Gourdol had been arrested, with a few of the most daring of those who had forced their way into the town, demanding their pastor with threats and menaces. Every one hoped their punishment would not be heavy. Such a hope could not be entertained for the sorrow-stricken Meniet, whose frank and joyous cheerfulness had given way to a deep melancholy. Torn from a happy home, from wife and children tenderly beloved, and all the comforts of social and domestic life, no prospect lay before him for the rest of his days but hard and bitter bondage—the lot of a slave, the oar and the lash.

Meniet deserved compassion; and he would have had more that day, but for him who walked beside him. Death is a mighty king; and in his presence none refuse their reverence. All looked longest on the face of him who was doomed to die. He was younger than most of those who looked, yet soon to be older than any in the land where "they reckon not by months and years." Mothers held their children up to see him; women wept, and men whispered each to other, "How calm he looks! and yet he is going to suffering and to death."

But for him the worst was over. The cup of bitterness had been borne to his lips when he saw himself the desolator of his sister's home—the bearer of death and destruction to those that loved him. In Meniet's speechless anguish; in the faces of those five who lay dead at his feet in the Bois de Brousse; in the wailing and lamentation with which the

Sabbath day's massacre had filled many a hut and hamlet that he knew, there was torture keener than that of the rack and the pulley. Sorrow for the sorrow of those simple mountaineers, whose passionate love for him had cost them so dear, had been the cloud that darkened his prison hours,—and the only one. Yet even in that sorrow he was not alone. He who wept over the sufferings of Jerusalem—He who had compassion on the multitude, because they were as sheep having no shepherd—spoke to his heart, and said, “I, even I, will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.” Thus in the lonely prison He comforted His servant. He did not send an angel, as of old ; He did not send His word, or His promise only—He came. In the dungeon’s gloom He drew near, with His prevailing “Weep not—Fear not ; for I am with thee !” No frost of pain, even of pain for others, could withstand the sunshine of His presence and His smile turned full upon His suffering child.

As Majal passed through the town gate, and came in view of the sorrowful crowds that lined the road, he had but one thought—how to comfort them “with the comfort wherewith he himself had been comforted of God.” Sometimes the compassion of the guards permitted the captive’s friends to draw near, to bid him farewell—even to touch his hand. But now this would be far too dangerous ; nor did Majal desire it. It would be terrible to risk a repetition of Gourdol’s experiment.

He little guessed what comfort was given by the radiant calm of his looks ; for he “knew not that his face shone.” But he had one way of reaching his friends. Clear and sweet rose the voice whose tones they loved, chanting his well-remembered favourite psalm :

“ The Lord’s my shepherd, I’ll not want ;  
    He makes me down to lie  
In pastures green. He leadeth me  
    The quiet waters by.”

Nor were Meniet and the other prisoners lacking in faith and courage. As the holy strain continued, their voices mingled with the pastor's. And willingly would the friendly band, who pressed as near as the bayonets of the guard would allow them, have joined in the last song he and they might sing together upon earth, but they could not—for tears.

At length all had passed. The solemn chant died away with those words of strong confidence :

“ Goodness and mercy all my life  
Shall surely follow me ;  
And in God's house for evermore  
My dwelling-place shall be.”

Soon nothing was visible, except a cloud of dust, and a gleam of steel, becoming every moment more distant.

“ It is over,” Lorin said. “ We shall see his face on earth no more ! ”

Still they lingered. Desjours had veiled his eyes with his hand, and was weeping silently. Lorin gently touched him. “ Come away, my friend,” he whispered. “ Remember this place is not safe for you ! ”

Desjours acquiesced, with a gentleness and humility new to him. “ I will go,” he said. “ God forgive me—a sinful man ! I did not believe till now that the great Shepherd could keep His sheep.”

They walked on in silence.

“ Have you thought whither you will go ? ” Lorin asked Desjours at last. “ For the present,” he added, “ I think you had better come home with me.”

“ I thank you, Père Lorin ; but I cannot do that. I have made my plan ; and a good one, as I think. I shall go to Philippe, who lies at home ill of his wound. The last place in all the world any one would dream of finding me, yet the safest place in all the world for me.”

“ And you dare trust *him*, even with your life ? Of all the men I have ever known, you are the strangest, Jean Desjours.”

"You may well say that. I trust my brother, though he wronged me sorely. Yet to this hour I did not trust my Saviour, who never wronged any, with His own faithful servant."

"Are you glad you waited for this day?" Lorin asked, turning to René.

"I shall never forget his look," he answered softly. "I think God has fulfilled to him, even now, that promise made to the risen and glorified—he sees His face, and His name is in his forehead."

## CHAPTER XII.

### MAZEL AGAIN.

“ The hearth—the hearth is desolate, the bright fire quenched and gone,  
That into happy children’s eyes once sweetly laughing shone ;  
The place where mirth and music met is hushed by day and night—  
Oh, for one kind, one sunny face, of all that there made light ! ”

RENÉ PLANS resisted a temptation to which many others yielded—that of following the captive throughout his long journey, to the very gates of Montpellier ;—and he missed thereby a strange and interesting sight. “ For everywhere,” the historian tells us, “ the weeping, threatening multitude thronged the passage of the confessor; and everywhere the pastors of the districts he traversed restrained the vengeful sorrow of their flocks. So that his journey of fifty leagues presented the extraordinary spectacle of an immense and continually recruited concourse of people, who never ceased to address the most touching farewells to the young martyr, and to honour him with an escort of tears and sobs.”

But René thought he could employ himself better than in paying his hero this useless honour. “ Ask those who love me to care for my sister and her children,” Majal had said to him. And he knew that these would now be left, not in desolation only, but in utter destitution. Their possessions would be confiscated; their homestead probably razed to the ground. Many, it is true, would rejoice to afford them shelter and assistance, but they could not, with any safety, remain in the neighbourhood of St. Argrève, scarcely even

in the Vivarais. They might, with too much reason, apprehend further persecution. Moreover, a heavy fine would be levied on all the Protestants residing within a certain distance of the place where the pastor had been apprehended. This would seriously cripple the resources of these poor people, and, indeed, reduce some of them to penury. Besides, many had suffered in what was called "the massacre of Vernoux," or were still liable to be "troubled" on account of their efforts to rescue the minister. It was therefore with a purpose that brought him strength and comfort that René took his way to Mazel. He did not expect that any of the late occupants would still venture to linger in the home that had been so happy ; but he hoped to hear tidings in the neighbourhood which would enable him to find them.

It was evening when he passed once more under the leafless boughs of the orchard, and drew near the porch, where the long row of neat bee-hives still bore witness to the thrift and industry of the late owners. He was surprised to see a light in the window of the guest-chamber, where, not quite two months ago, he slept, fearing no evil. Some one, perhaps, had been left in charge of the house. It could do no harm to ascertain. He knocked at the closed door, seldom closed in other days. After a short delay, soft, light footsteps approached, the door was half opened, with evident caution, and a child's voice inquired, "Is it thou, Babette?"

René knew that voice. "Dear mademoiselle," he said, "do not be afraid. It is a friend—René Plans. May I come in?"

Then the door opened wide, two little white hands grasped René's large brown one, and Madeleine said joyfully, "Ah, René ! is it you ? Come in ; the mother will be glad to see you."

René followed her into the large room which had been so lately the gathering-place of a cheerful family circle. It was now empty, dark, and fireless. But Madeleine presently brought, first a lamp, then as much firewood as she could carry.

"Babette is gone to St. Argèvre for medicine," she explained. "But I will light the fire. I can do it quite as well."

René, of course, relieved her of the task, asking anxiously, "Is it Madame Meniet who is ill?"

"No; it is the grandmother. She has lain in fever—a strange kind of fever—ever since that night. But she is better now: she slept to-day, very quietly, for full two hours. Then she called me, and bade me sit beside her, and repeat a psalm." The child's words and manner showed how entirely her mind was absorbed in the details and interests of the sick room.

"Where is Claude?" René asked.

"Mother sent him away, and me too, because she feared we might be carried off by the soldiers. She could not go, on account of the grandmother, who was so ill it would have killed her to leave the house."

"Was Madame Meniet, then, left quite alone?"

"No; Babette stayed with her. But the grandmother hates Babette, and will not let her wait on her; so, you see, I had to come back."

"Did Madame Meniet send for you?"

"Oh, no! Indeed, she was sorry when first I came—but what else could I do, René? Mother wanted me. I asked cousin Martin to bring me home; and he did, the very next day. He is always so good."

"Will you let me stay and help you, dear Madeleine?" René asked gently. He was kneeling before the fire arranging the wood, and the rising flame flickered on his brown, handsome face, as he turned half round to the "fair, pale child, with a faded cheek," who stood watching him with a look of thought and care pathetic in one so young.

"Oh, thank you," she said, quite simply. "I should like it very much. You could do many things for us, you are so strong. Besides, the grandmother likes you. She said you were 'bien gentil.' Perhaps she will let you sit with her sometimes, then mother will sleep a little more."

At that moment a step was heard on the stairs, and the child ran to her mother. René heard her say, "Mother, here is René Plans—come all the way from his home in the mountains to see us."

Ere René could think how to tell them he had not come from his mountain home, but from a place far more interesting to them, Madame Meniet entered the room.

"You are so strong," had Madeleine said ; yet, strong as he was, he trembled as he rose to meet her. He had seen many tears lately, even upon manly faces. There were no tears in those large blue eyes, which looked the larger for the dark circles round them, for the hollow cheeks, and white, wasted features; but there was a patient sorrow, deeper than tears. The lamp-light showed silver threads amongst the fair brown locks, half covered by the simple white coiffure. Had years passed away since René saw her last? Years were not needed—or even weeks. More than once has a single night been known to change brown hairs to grey.

She stretched out her hand to René, and thanked him for coming to them in their sorrow ; then she commended Madeleine for lighting the fire, and quietly set food before him.

It was a silent, sorrowful meal. None dared to speak of what filled all hearts. Nor could René summon courage even to say that he came from Vernoux. It was a relief to fetch wood for the fire, once and again ; to admit Babette ; to re-fasten the door ; and to protest that he desired no accommodation for the night except a cloak or sheepskin rug. But for such welcome interruptions, the heavy atmosphere of that voiceless grief would have been stifling.

A simple question of Madeleine's broke the spell at last.

"How did you hurt your arm?" she asked, glancing at the bandage, which he had not yet been able to discard.

"The hurt is nothing," René answered. But, with the words, the tide of suppressed feeling rose suddenly, and

choked his voice. So had he spoken, standing in a prison room, to receive the pastor's generous, fatal message. Two messages had he borne for him ; one intrusted to him beside his father's grave, and delivered in the place where he sat now : the other—He covered his face, for the tears flowed quickly, and would not be restrained.

Annette laid her hand gently upon his. " You, too, have shed your blood for us," she said. " Is it not so ? "

Then René told his story, making some things clear to her of which hitherto she had only heard confused rumours. It cost him much ; but if he could have understood the blessed relief tears bring the burdened heart, he would have been amply repaid. Before he ended, Annette was weeping, for brother and for husband, as she scarcely hoped to weep until she knew that man had done his worst, and that the worst he could do was over.

Majal's self-sacrifice, which wrung the heart of René with such bitter pain, brought only comfort to hers. It seemed to her, as to the pastors, quite natural.

" We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren," was her brief and simple comment.

Annette's affection for husband and for children formed the warp and woof of her web of life, sober in colouring, soft, warm, and strong in texture. Her love for her brother was the thread of gold embroidery flashing through it, and consecrating it all to nobler purposes and finer uses. Losing, in one hour, husband and brother, she lost at once the staff of life, its common daily bread ; and the joy of life, its royal festive wine, " that maketh glad the heart."

But were both indeed lost ? For Majal, nothing more was to be hoped or feared. The Intendant of Languedoc, the Chevalier Lenain, was a stern judge ; very hostile to the Protestants, and greatly feared by them. But in no case could mercy have been expected. Never but once, since the Revocation, had mercy been shown a captive pastor. Not many months before, a young and promising minister was betrayed and imprisoned, yet not led forth to

the scaffold ; for in an evil hour he was overcome by the fear of death, and the solicitations and promises always liberally employed. Then, "like the lost Pleiad, seen again no more," Duperron vanished ; and his name was seldom uttered, save in prayer, by those who once had loved and honoured him. They were soon to hear that he was dead—in the morning of his days—of a broken heart. But such tears as were shed for him should never dim the eyes of Majal's sister. "He 'dwells in the secret place of the Most High,'" said Annette ; "wherefore should I doubt that he 'shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty?'"

But for her husband there remained just hope enough to torture the heart and keep it restless. It was almost certain he would be condemned to the galleys, and for life. Yet criminals such as he occasionally found mercy. After weary years at the oar—perhaps five, seven, or ten, doing the work of twenty or thirty upon frame and mind—grace was sometimes extended to the worn-out "forgat," and he was allowed to go home and die amongst dear familiar faces. And in the mean time, much might be done to soften his cruel captivity, and to make the separation between those that loved each other a little less absolute than that of the grave.

Next morning Annette quietly explained to René, "We have much to be thankful for, as you see, my friend. The little ones might have been taken, and I also.\* Indeed, we were in great danger. But whether the Commandant of St. Argriève (who was summoned hither at midnight, so soon as my brother was apprehended) dared not encumber himself with women and children, or whether my brother's pleading touched his heart I cannot tell. He pleaded for us nobly that dreadful night ; and the Commandant heard him with respect and attention, because he at once acknowledged himself a minister of the Gospel, and answered every question put to him with perfect frankness ; save

\* This was actually done, some years afterwards, in the case of the unfortunate Novis family, who sheltered Pasteur Lafage.

only that he would give no clue by which his registers might be found, as others would have been compromised thereby. However that may be, we were left here; and only required to give our parole that we would not remove any part of my husband's property. They ought to have sealed whatever they thought valuable, and placed a guard upon the house; but it was evident they had not a man to spare. I should have gone away, for the children's sake; but the mother-in-law's illness rendered that impossible. So I sent Claude and Madeleine to relatives at Désubas, our birthplace. How my little comforter came back, you know already; but Claude is there still. The farm labourers, who are all zealous Protestants, and more or less compromised by what has happened, are dismissed, of course; and some of them have thought it necessary to conceal themselves. But our good Babette refused to leave us; and this was God's providence, for I could scarce have managed all, had I been left quite alone. René, if indeed you can stay with us until it is possible to remove the mother, you will do us great kindness. Your presence here will not, I think, be dangerous to yourself, since you are a stranger in the neighbourhood. Still, your relatives ought to be considered, especially your sister. I would not make a sister's heart anxious."

René hastened to assure her that his sister would be safe and happy in the care of the Brissacs, and that he had told Jacques to prepare her for a lengthened absence on his part. "But, madame," he inquired, with a boy's abrupt frankness, "whither do you intend to go when Madame Larachette has recovered?"

"To some of our friends," Annette answered wearily, even with a kind of indifference. One day's burden of pain and perplexity was enough for one day's power of endurance.

"Madame," said René, with evident eagerness, restrained by a reverence that made him seem almost timid, "Madame, I know a place where you would be safe, and free from all

alarms. Near Tanargues, in the Hautes Cévennes, on a mountain-side, there is a solitary cottage, a league from the little village, itself far out of the world. Our curé is a kind, quiet, careless man. If he gets his dues, and the fines for the children who absent themselves from school, he rarely troubles any one."

"Is it then to Trou, to your native place, that you advise me to go?" asked Annette. She thought the advice good, though it came from such young lips. For many reasons she wished to leave the neighbourhood. More than the persecution of enemies, she feared the imprudent kindness of friends, who might easily endanger themselves, and could not benefit her. And gladly would she escape the too painful sympathy with which every eye would look upon Majal's sister in the district where Majal was so passionately loved. After some thought she said, "Suppose we do it, for the present—how could we live?"

"There is the cottage I speak of, very much at your service, madame. It is not large; but there will be room enough for you all. It was built by my father's brother."

"Your home, René?" Annette interrupted—not without emotion. "Do you, then, propose to receive us into your home?"

"Do not think me over-bold, madame," René said, with an air of diffidence not unbecoming to him. "But I think it is God who has put the thought into my heart. For I prayed earnestly, when I had to obey M. Majal and bear that message that cost us so dear, that God would give me, even yet, something to do which would comfort him, if he knew it. And this would. You will be quite safe, madame. No one will trouble you, or the children. And if my father can see it from heaven, he will be well content."

"But René, your sister?—not to speak of yourself?"

"My sister is promised in marriage to Jacques Brissac. They are to live in the village, with Jacques's parents. And I—" René paused and hesitated. A very short time, if measured by weeks and days, had passed away since he

said, with strong confidence, "I shall be a minister." Now he drew back in trembling awe, and took the shoes from off his feet; for the ground was holy. "And I," he resumed—content to occupy for the present a far humbler place—"I shall till the field, store the chestnuts, keep the sheep. And in the evenings, if you will permit me, madame, I will learn of you. For you have many good books, and you understand them. While I have been so poor a scholar that now I can only read and write, and repeat Ostervald's catechism."

"Ah, my son! the books were taken from us that sad night. The whole house was searched and rifled; and, at last, the cachette was discovered. Not that it mattered. No man shall ever be the worse for any written or spoken word of my brother's. Dear René, I understand your generous kindness. My heart thanks you, more than my lips; and I think the plan you propose for us a good one. For a little while,—only a little while, a time of waiting—until God shows us what we ought to do. But we must stay here, if permitted, until the mother is strong enough to bear a journey, and until tidings reach us from the South."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### CHRISTMAS DAY.

"Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky."

MADAME LARACHETTE'S malady was nervous fever. Not that Madame Meniet or Babette, her only physicians, called it by that name. They knew nothing of nerves in theory, and very little by experience ; but they had a traditional code of medicine and surgery, according to which they treated all cases. The prescriptions of this code were severe ; doses were violent, bleedings and blisters frequent. It seems wonderful that patients did not oftener succumb under such energetic treatment. But the simple frugal life of the Desert braced the bodily frame to endurance, as the strong fervent piety, nourished upon the New Testament, the Psalms, and the exhortations of the pastors, nerved the spirit to heroism. Moreover, in medicine as in other things, common sense and experience exercised a beneficial influence, preventing a too rigid adherence to traditional rules.

Madame Larachette began to recover, though slowly, with infinite suffering to herself, and scarcely less to those around her. An imperious temper, a heart half broken, and nerves jarred and strained by fever, formed an apparatus of torture more cruel for the patient than even for those who were ministering to her wants. But although Annette and Madeleine suffered keenly, each for the other

rather than for herself, the illness in the house proved in some respects a relief and blessing. Had Annette been left, during that dreary interval, only to watch and pray for those she loved, mind and body would probably have sunk under the strain. But even the dungeons of Montpellier, where two most dear to her were awaiting their doom, sometimes faded from her thoughts whilst the duties and cares of the sick-room engrossed and claimed them.

In little Madeleine she had a most efficient helper. Hers was already the woman's heart of loving self-sacrifice, and the woman's true blessing :—

“A child's kiss  
Set on thy sighing lips shall make thee glad ;  
A poor man served by thee shall make thee rich ;  
A sick man helped by thee shall make thee whole ;  
Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense  
Of service which thou renderest.”

René watched the child with wonder, as if she were some fair bud unfolding before him into a rare and beautiful flower. At first he assumed, without consideration, that she merely stood in the shadow of her mother's grief, reflecting her feelings in a dim, childlike way. But he discovered gradually, and by slight signs and tokens, that the quiet, silent little girl was taking the family sorrow to her heart after a manner entirely her own.

Madeleine was in everything a Majal, not a Meniet. The broad open forehead, the candid blue eyes, the firm sweetness—or sweet firmness—of the finely-moulded mouth, were outward tokens none could mistake. Claude, on the other hand, showed hitherto his father's likeness only; although there was hidden in that yet unwrought mine a vein of the finer ore of his mother's nature, which might be brought to light in after-years. Now he was merely a stout, rosy, dark-eyed boy, with more beauty of form and colour than of expression, full of fun and merriment, and very passionate. He delighted in play, sunshine, toys, sweet-meats, as his father frankly and innocently enjoyed the

pleasant things that fell to his lot ; and, like his father, he enjoyed sharing them as much as having them.

As often happens, the boy, who resembled his father, clung far more fondly to his mother ; while the girl, who was her mother's reflection, idolized her father. But there is no reserve so sensitive, so shrinking, as that of a child of unusually deep feelings and mature character. Not even her mother guessed how Madeleine mourned in secret for that beloved father, who could never come home to them again ; who would be doomed to sit day and night, unsheltered in sunshine or frost, on the narrow bench of a galley, most probably until he died. Many a fearful story, only too true, had she heard of the sufferings of the confessors at the galleys. Of these stories she never spoke ; but she pondered them in her heart, and often lay awake in the hours of darkness with that childish heart strained and racked, as they rose before her in all their shifting scenes of horror ; one thing only alike in all—the victim's face :—that face she loved best on earth.

She loved Majal also, very tenderly ; yet for him she did not mourn. A great awe and mystery, which her childish sympathies could not penetrate, hung over his fate. He seemed far away, wrapped in the strange sad glory of martyrdom, which, like a radiant mist, “enwound him fold by fold,”—

“Until himself became as mist  
Before her ; moving ghostlike to his doom.”

Soon after René's arrival at Mazel, there was a long day of storm and fitful rain, dreary within and without. Madame Larachette had been very ill, and very restless and impatient. The previous night had brought no sleep to Annette, and the morning was filled with the petty cares and duties of the sick-room. But at length, when the gloom of the winter afternoon began to deepen, she was persuaded by Babette and “the children” (as she called René and Madeleine) to take a little much-needed rest. The watch

beside her grandmother devolved on Madeleine ; Babette prepared supper ; and René attended to the cattle. While thus occupied, the stormy wind bore to his ears a sweet sound of distant bells, which, though he heard, he scarcely heeded. His work done, he came back to the empty sitting-room, now half in darkness, and lounged idly, in weary disheartened mood, upon one of the oak settles.

He had remained for some time without changing his position, when the door opened quickly and noiselessly, and Madeleine—a white ghost-like figure, in her little cloak of homespun, home-bleached wool—ran past him to the darkest corner of the room. There she knelt, and buried her face in her hands. René at first thought she was weeping, and would fain have tried to comfort her ; but, greatly to his surprise, her gestures and half-smothered exclamations showed passion rather than grief. The small foot stamped the oaken floor, and the slight frame quivered, as, unconscious of his presence, she murmured, “Cruel, wicked words ! Oh, grandmother, how could you speak them !”

René was not only surprised, but alarmed. He came softly to her side ; but he could not have told afterwards, nor could she, by what half-uttered words, by what light touches, he sought to soothe her. After a while tears came to her relief ;—then the brief passion was over. She tried hard to restrain her sobs ; exercising a degree of self-control rather mournful to see in so young a child. “I will be good now,” she said with simplicity.

“It is Madame Larachette who is not good,” René answered bluntly.

“Had she said anything else, I would not have cared. But it was cruel to say of him—of *him* who always thought for every one before himself—that he was over-bold ; that he might have known he was watched, and ought not to have ventured here ! And oh, René!—that he was the cause of all our sorrows, and it had been good for us never to have seen his face ! How dared she ?” Once more a

crimson flush mounted to the child's white forehead, and the blue veins swelled and throbbed.

René's wrath was greater than even hers. Yet the aged, broken-hearted woman, from whom the desire of her eyes—her brave and affectionate son—had been taken at a stroke, deserved pity, not anger. It was in the anguish of her soul that she cast bitter words, like arrows, around her; little caring whom, or where, they struck.

"I must be wise," Madeleine said, again trying to recover herself. "Il faut être sage" is always the first lesson impressed on the French child. "I must comfort mother, and take care of her. And I ought to be kind and loving to the poor grandmother. She never meant the words she said."

"You are always kind and loving, Madeleine," René maintained stoutly. "And you always comfort every one."

"Ah, René, you don't know. That night—" Madeleine's voice sank to a whisper and she drew closer to René. "That night, even little Claude was quiet and brave; while I thought of no one's sorrow but my own, and troubled every one."

Madeleine had never spoken of that night before. René said gently, "But then Claude did not understand, I suppose?"

"No; of course he did not. Oh, René! why does God let us be so happy, and not tell us, even in a whisper, when sorrow is coming? I often think of the evening before. We all sat round the fire, listening to my uncle's stories of what he saw when he went over the mountains to take that other pastor's place. Claude and I knew he must go long before daybreak, so we could not see him again. Even the grandmother did not forbid us to stay as long as we liked. At last it grew very late, and Claude fell asleep in his arms. He carried him to our room, and I followed. I was soon in bed and asleep. And then—" She stopped and shuddered. "I can't tell you how it all

happened, René. I awoke suddenly in terror. There were lights everywhere, and footsteps, and voices. I got up and dressed. Looking out of the window, I saw men with steel caps, matchlocks and bayonets, standing under the trees of the orchard. There were men too, in the house—everywhere. They searched every place, even our room ; wakening Claude, who was terrified, and cried for our mother. I wished to go to her also ; but we were told to stay where we were, and not dare to stir, for our lives. Then we heard a great noise and trampling of horse, for the Commandant of St. Argrève had been sent for, and was come. After that, all was quiet for a long time. Claude fell asleep again ; I sat on the bed, shivering with cold and fear. At last Babette came in weeping, and said our father asked for us ; we must come and bid him farewell. She dressed Claude quickly, and led us both downstairs. René, until then I did not know that our father, too——”

René stroked the small hand tenderly, but did not speak. Presently Madeleine went on. “ We were brought into this room. A blaze of torches and of soldiers’ weapons seemed to fill the place. But through all, I saw him.”

“ M. Majal ? ” René asked involuntarily.

“ No. I saw no one but my father. He sat near the table ; his head bowed over it, buried in his hands. Mother stood beside him. Her face was sad and white ; but she was quite still and calm. She held on her arm my father’s warmest cloak, ready for him to put on (for the snow was heavy), and that comforted me :—it made this strange going away look a little more like others I remembered. I took Claude’s hand, and we went up to him together. He raised his head, took Claude in his arms, and kissed and blessed him. Claude only wept quietly ;—he did not understand all. Then my turn came. I felt his arms round me, I saw his tears ; I wept too, and clung to him. I think I cried out—said no one should take him from us. I don’t know. I can tell no more.”

"Do not try," said René, gently; for the child was weeping and trembling.

"One thing more I must tell. Babette and the rest all say they tried to part us, but could not loose my hold, so close I clung. But I remember nothing until my uncle's hand touched me—oh, René, so gently!—yet I had to obey that touch. I could not struggle, or even sob aloud. He took my hand in his, and led me to my mother. 'You must comfort her, Madeleine,' he said. That was all."

"And was that his last farewell?" asked René.

"It was. But oh, René, my father! my father!"

"Your father you may see again one day, even on earth," René said. The bitter tears shed so lately over his own father's grave deepened his sympathy with Madeleine's sorrow; and he was at no loss for tender words with which to comfort her.

But though he heard many things from Madeleine's lips in after-years, never again did he hear aught of that fatal night. Yet it left upon the childish heart an impression never effaced. To comfort her mother became thenceforward the law of Madeleine's life: no tears of selfish sorrow must hinder that, or any work for others given her to do.

René quite understood that the subject was dismissed. After a pause he asked, gently, "Don't you hear the sound of church bells through the wind?"

"I have been hearing them all day since early morning," Madeleine answered, looking at him through the twilight with blue eyes still full of tears. "They are the bells of St. Argrève. Why are they ringing?"

"Don't you know? Our Catholic neighbours are keeping holiday; for to-day, they say, Christ was born."

"I thought in my dream this morning that I was listening to the psalms the angels sing over the ruined temples," Madeleine said.

"Do they sing psalms there?" René asked. "I never knew that."

Madeleine told him the beautiful legend that still lingers amongst the children of the persecuted Huguenots. "When my uncle came from the South, he said the old people there assured him that when, after the Revocation, their fathers went by night to weep over their ruined temples, they often heard the angels singing in the sky above them. And as they listened, they recognised their own beloved psalms, that they used to sing there in the old happy days before the temples were destroyed."

"Is that true? Does he believe it?" René asked, prudently holding his own judgment in suspense.

"He said it was true," Madeleine answered. "Only the songs were in their own hearts, not in the sky; and the names of the angels who sang them were Faith, Hope, and Love. And this was what they sang: 'The Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places, and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness shall be found therein; thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.' Mother found the words for me afterwards, and I learned them by heart. This morning I thought I heard the angels singing 'thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.' I was very sorry to awake and find it was a dream."

Annette came into the room at that moment, with a lamp in her hand. "Of what are you talking, my children, here in the dark?" she asked.

"We are saying the bells are ringing for Christmas Day," René answered.

"I know it," she rejoined. "We also should be glad and rejoice, since for us there is born a Saviour, even Christ the Lord. After supper, we will read of the star and the shepherds, and the angels' song of peace and goodwill."

Yet it was not that story they read after all. The great multitude of the heavenly host, lighting up the midnight sky with the sudden blaze of their starry wings, were too dazzling for those tear-dimmed eyes. They took refuge in

the shadow that is dearer than the brightest light of earth—or heaven—the shadow of the cross. And there weeping eyes and weary hearts found rest.

Only three and thirty years did the Child for whose birthday the bells were ringing at St. Argrève, and throughout the world, spend upon earth. And of none of these, save the last three, have we almost any record. Yet in every land, in every age, have the sons and daughters of earth loved Him with a love greater than any they have borne to their nearest and dearest. When the name of husband or wife, of mother or child, ceases to thrill the loosening chords of life, the dying pulse still leaps, the dying heart still throbs, at the name of Jesus Christ.

For that Name, the young Pastor of the Desert, Majal-Désubas, was even then going to death; not in peace alone, but in “joy unspeakable, and full of glory.” He was but one amongst thousands of whom history tells us ; and there were tens of thousands more, of whom no record remains, save that which is written on high.

Let those who refuse to believe in miracles account, if they can, for that great miracle, ever new—that wonderful love of Christ, of which even the dim reflection, in poor human hearts, so truly “passeth knowledge.”

## CHAPTER XIV.

### WAITING.

"Death is so near us, life cools from its heat."

E. B. BROWNING.

THE dark days of January did not pass quite uneventfully at Mazel. They brought an informal but kindly-meant intimation from the Commandant of St. Argrève that the bereaved family might remain where they were until the Intendant should make known his decision with regard to their dwelling. Then came tidings of comfort from the lips of those who had accompanied the captives to the gates of Montpellier. They bore witness to the pastor's calm, self-forgetting heroism ; and to the growing courage and cheerfulness of his companions in suffering, to whom he was still God's minister, unceasing in his efforts to strengthen and console them. And they thought the Commandant of Vernoux, M. de Davèze (who took charge of the prisoners during the whole journey), had been as courteous and compassionate as circumstances permitted.

Shortly after these tidings reached her, an anxiety of another kind disturbed Année. The friends to whom she had sent little Claude informed her that Sisters of Charity, who were pursuing their vocation in the neighbourhood, had begun to notice the child, to praise his beauty and intelligence, and to give him toys and sweetmeats. There were few things the Protestants of France dreaded more than to see their little ones caressed by strangers ; and strangers

who wore a religious garb were doubly dangerous. The abduction of Protestant children was by far the most cruel feature in the persecutions of the eighteenth century. It caused vastly greater, because more widespread, suffering than the gibbet, the galleys, or the dungeon. If unimpeachable contemporary testimony did not remain to prove its appalling frequency, this would now be considered simply incredible. "No Protestant could be sure of embracing, on his return at night, those whom he left in his home in the morning."

Annette knew too well what would follow the caresses and gifts of the Sisters of Charity. Some attractive toy—perhaps an Agnus Dei, or a gaily-painted picture of the Virgin—would be offered to the little heretic, who would readily accept the pretty plaything, and cherish it as a treasure. He would gladly go to such kind friends; and, in grateful return for bon-bons and dragées, would please them by repeating after them a few words in a language he did not understand. And this would be abundantly sufficient to warrant their representing that Claude Meniet, an intelligent child, "arrived at the age of reason"—that is to say, seven years old—had evinced a desire to enter the fold of the Catholic Church. It would then become the duty of those in authority to foster such gracious dispositions, by removing him from his heretic parents or guardians; and an order for his forcible transfer to some convent or Jesuit school would be the inevitable result. It is true he was not yet seven years old. But how could that be proved, in the absence of any legal record of birth or baptism? It was possible, however, that those who longed so tenderly after the child's soul might yield to the dictates of human prudence, and await the actual completion of his seventh year—the ripe age at which the laws of France permitted and encouraged Protestant children to abjure Protestantism, and thus remove themselves from parental control and authority.

It was enough for Annette Meniet to lose in one day husband and brother, without also losing her only son. In

her alarm she sent for her boy, thinking him in less danger at Mazel than at Désubas. The play and laughter of the merry child brightened that sorrowful household. His presence was a comfort to all, except the poor invalid. She was very fond of her grandson, whom, in spite of strict theories of education, she sometimes indulged, even weakly; but as the child's temper, like her own, was passionate, frequent collisions were unavoidable. René and Madeleine had often to exercise their ingenuity in keeping Claude amused and happy at a safe distance from his grandmother's room.

At length January glided into February. It was the second day of the new month. René afterwards retraced its every incident in the solemn light thrown back upon it by what was happening elsewhere, but at Mazel it passed like other days. Towards evening he was in one of the outhouses preparing food for the cattle, and indulging a bitter thought that even this was useless and thankless labour, of which only strangers would reap the benefit. He heard some one call him softly; but he did not at once recognise the voice. He thought it might be a bearer of the tidings they were longing for, yet dreading; so he hurried forth, without waiting to resume his coat, or lay aside the wooden fork he had been using.

Jean Desjours stood before him in the gathering twilight. He looked worn and haggard: it does not improve the appearance, even of the bravest man, to have a price set upon his head. Yet there was not in his bearing the hopeless despondency René observed a short time before, but rather a trustful courage and resolution.

"Have you heard anything?" was his first word, as he grasped René's hand.

René told him all they knew; but so much he had himself heard already. "But why are you here, Desjours?" he asked then. "Has your cousin, after all, proved unworthy of your confidence?"

"That indeed he has not. There is much good in

Philippe. One black spot on a man's face does not make him a negro. He lies ill of his wound, and in great suffering, poor lad. But he would have sheltered me ; ay, risked his life for mine. I know, however, that when he recovers he may be called in question for the part he played that Sabbath day ; and if, besides, he were thought to have harboured me—What would you have me do ?"

" What do you intend to do ?"

" Cross the mountains ; take another name ; find work in a farm, or under a shepherd. But I thought to linger about here for a few days, until some certain tidings reach us."

Here little Claude interrupted them. He had been sent to call René to supper.

" Tell Madame Meniet I am coming," said René. Then to Desjours, with a little hesitation, " I am afraid I ought not to ask you to come in with me. Remain here ; I will return soon, and bring you food."

" Good ! That just suits me. Scant credit as the world gives me for prudence, I am at least not mad enough to compromise Madame Meniet."

But René did not find his part as easy as he expected. The severe morality of the Desert made no allowance for what are called " white lies." Claude's simple questions about the stranger he was talking with in the yard could not be answered or parried without awakening Madame Meniet's apprehensions, which her sorrows rendered peculiarly acute. At last René found it necessary to tell her the whole truth. She was grieved ; nay, almost angry with him.

" And you could leave outside our door, desolate and shelterless, the man on whose head a price is set for the love he bore my brother !" she said, reproachfully. " I cannot suffer it ! "

At once she rose from the table, and went forth to seek the wanderer.

One moment's pure joy and comfort reached the weary, storm-tossed heart of Jean Desjours when Madame Meniet

took his hand in hers. They were not quite strangers to each other. Annette had sometimes seen him in her brother's company, and had heard her husband rally him good-humouredly upon his enthusiastic devotion to him.

"My friend," she said, "I know all you have done and suffered. In his name who is now, I little doubt, beyond all doing and suffering here below, I thank you. To me he is dearer than life; to you also, as you have nobly proved. Come in. It were strange indeed if you found no welcome beneath the last friendly roof that sheltered him."

But Desjours, though touched, was firm. "I have caused trouble enough already," he said. "I would not injure any one; you least of all, madame."

Annette, however, could be firm also. The debate lasted long, and ended eventually in a sort of compromise. Desjours accepted food and shelter, and a suit of clothes which one of the farm labourers had left behind. With the dress he assumed the duties of its late wearer; nor did it seem probable that he would thereby entail any risk of discovery upon himself, or endanger his kind entertainers.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE CAPTAIN OF DRAGOONS.

"What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon days like these?"

NOT many days afterwards, a young officer of dragoons rode leisurely from St. Argrève to Mazel. The morning was fine; the sun lit up the gay uniform and brilliant accoutrements which as yet, to their owner's sorrow, were free from the honourable stains of real warfare. As he was unattended, save by a well-dressed orderly, who wore no weapon but a sword, his present errand could scarcely be one of military duty.

It was the lot of Emile de la Sablère, Marquis de Chantal, captain of dragoons, to serve the king in the province of Languedoc. Being brave as a "preux chevalier," he would far rather have done loyal service at the seat of the war, which was then raging fiercely in the Low Countries and in Germany. But the force of circumstances and the strong cords of interest drew him to the South, and held him there, in the neighbourhood of his wealthy and powerful grandfather, M. L'Intendant Lenain, Baron d'Asfeld. While, therefore, his brethren in arms won the laurels of military glory at Fontenoy, young Chantal was chained to a round of petty duties, which he despised because they were without danger and without glory. He longed ardently for the threatened invasion of Provence by the Allies, while in the mean time he took part in whatever pleasures and dissipations Montpellier afforded; not with enjoyment, for they gave

him none, but to escape what he considered the worse evils of solitude and reflection.

He found, however, some consolation in the friendship and society of distant family connections, whose ancient château overlooked the Rhone, not far from the fragrant orchards of St. Peray. As he was returning, some months ago, from a brief visit to their home, René Plans had enjoyed the honour of being his guide for a few stages. Upon that occasion he had outstayed his time, and risked the displeasure of his commanding officer. But the Intendant interested himself in the fortunes of his grandson, and he knew that their relatives at St. Peray had at their disposal the hand of a wealthy orphan ward. He therefore not only made Chantal's peace with his colonel, but contrived that the young captain should now be sent upon an errand which would give him an opportunity of revisiting his friends. It was this errand which had brought him from Montpellier to St. Argrève. He found it distasteful, even hateful; and postponed its execution as long as he dared. And it was for a purpose altogether different from that with which he had been charged that he was now riding to Mazel. He was the bearer of two letters, for the safe delivery of which he had pledged his honour; though neither to the Intendant nor yet to his colonel.

As he rides along in the sunshine, we can observe him at our leisure. The face, on the whole, is a good one, with fine, well-marked features; the forehead broad, but low, and shaded by the indispensable though ungraceful peruke. The lips are weak and restless; the eyes more keen than thoughtful, indicating a mind rather quick to apprehend than able to originate. One moment he looks his real age, two or three and twenty; the next, much older. His life has been changeful, and its varying experiences have left their traces upon cheek and brow. In his fourteenth year he began to drain the cup of pleasure in Parisian salons and theatres, and other places less easy to name. As he grew older, intrigues, adventures, duels, were

the spices that added zest to the draught. But at last the dregs were reached ; their taste seemed bitter, and he willingly flung the cup away. Nobly born and poor, ambition awoke within him ; and it became his design to re-establish the decayed fortunes of his house. It was as a step to the accomplishment of this design that he sought, and obtained, the forgiveness of M. Lenain, whom he had offended in former years. Nor were the prayers and tears of a widowed mother, to whom, to his honour, he was warmly attached, without their influence in bringing about his determination to propitiate his powerful grandfather.

Moreover, M. de Chantal belonged, heart and soul, to the young France of his day and generation ; a restless, feverish, dissatisfied generation, seething with new ideas and crude half-formed purposes. These were springing up everywhere —a rank, luxurious growth—amidst the worn-out mockeries of an artificial age, amidst splendour that veiled corruption, under the “iron hand” of despotism, sheathed in the “velvet glove” of luxury. In impatient disgust with the actual world that surrounded them, the young were turning to the fair fields and pastures of what they called pure, unsophisticated nature ; where, however, no true land of promise, no Eden without the serpent was to be found ; since those whose fancy constructed the Paradise brought thither the vices of the gilded halls of Versailles. Others, the far larger number, were pressing forward, with their brilliant leader Voltaire, into the seat of the scorner, and seeking to learn eternal truth at the lips of “the spirit that denies for ever.”

Emile de Chantal had, as yet, denied nothing ; though he had indulged in much vague, aimless doubt. His was not the seat of the scorner ; but rather the couch of the dreamer. Like his gentle, gifted brother-in-arms, the Chevalier Florian, he sought relief from the painful contemplation of an age of iron and clay in fancied return to the age of gold, when war and wealth and crime (and above all things, priestcraft) as yet were not ; and shepherds and shepherdesses told their

innocent loves in verdant fields and beside purling brooks. Already the "silver flowers"—prizes of the "floral games" of Toulouse—had rewarded his essays in pastoral poetry. Yet all this, in fact, was utterly unreal. It scarcely rose even to the dignity of romance ; it was but sentiment. His shepherds and shepherdesses were chevaliers and marquises of the court of Louis XV., with a thin disguise of antique raiment, crooks, and hair *au naturel*, covering, but not concealing, their paint and patches.

But within the last few weeks a true poem, of God's own making—a genuine, heroic tragedy—had wrought itself out under the eyes of Emile de Chantal. Coming in suddenly amongst the elaborate unrealities of his life, it had impressed him strongly. It was as if—while he sat amidst the lights, the music, and the tinsel glories of the theatre—some hand had drawn aside a curtain that veiled the solemn, starry sky.

All his capacity for generous enthusiasm was awakened by what he saw and heard. But his impressions, though quick and keen, were not always lasting. While they lasted, he made no secret of them ; on the contrary, he longed to utter, to share them. He was never so happy as when either receiving or producing a sensation. This was not from vanity ; but from an imaginative and emotional nature. More than aught else, his mother and his honour alone excepted, M. de Chantal loved what he called "serremens du cœur."

It was certainly an anachronism on the part of the Intendant (though perpetrated with an amiable intention) to send this fanciful, emotional child of the eighteenth century to St. Argrève, charged with the duty of razing to the ground the house of an honest man, for an offence the executioner of justice would himself have gladly committed, had the opportunity been afforded him. In a few days, at farthest, the harsh commission must be fulfilled ; yet this morning he rides to Mazel, not as a minister of the law, but as a private gentleman, whose kindness of heart has led him to undertake a charge of which he wishes honourably to acquit himself.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### VICTORY.

"Lubac n'est plus à plaindre,  
Il est hors du danger ;  
Il n'a plus rien à craindre,  
Ni rien à désirer."

*Complainte sur la Mort de M. Lubac (Désubas),  
ministre du Saint Évangile.*

LITTLE Claude, from one of the upper windows, saw the horsemen approaching, and gave the alarm.

When therefore the officer, dismounting at the door, flung the bridle rein to his attendant, there already stood before him a fair, pale, graceful woman, whose claim to the letters he bore was not doubtful. With a courtly and respectful salutation he said, "I have, I presume, the honour to address Madame Meniet? I come from Montpellier; and I bear letters for madame from those of whom she most desires to hear."

Annette rather motioned than invited him into the house. He followed her to the family room, where he instantly became the centre of a group, who stood around, awaiting his tidings in breathless silence.

That day, for the first time, the shattered invalid had resumed her chair by the fire; herself sorrowfully wondering, as others could not fail to do, why a life so useless and burdensome was spared, whilst the young and gifted, whose lives were of priceless value, were laid low. Madeleine stood beside her, tenderly holding the feeble, withered, hand. René, in his eagerness, drew nearer the stranger

and recognised, to his surprise, the kind-hearted young officer, whose guide he had been at the cost of a bitter repentance. Claude kept close to his mother's side; Desjours and Babette stood in the background.

Chantal looked around, first upon the little group, then, not without astonishment, upon the appointments of the room, which were those of an ordinary, though comfortable farmhouse. It would be hard to say what he expected to see there; but no mark of refinement or cultivation would have seemed to him out of place.

Words were not found easily, though he had much to tell. It was Annette who broke the silence. "And my husband, monsieur?" she asked, quietly taking for granted his friendly interest and compassion.

"I am sorry, madame, to be the bearer of heavy tidings. M. Meniet is condemned to the galleys."

"For—life?" The brief words were rather breathed than spoken.

The young man bowed his head sorrowfully. The blow was borne in silence, as one long and certainly expected. Only the children wept quietly; and a low, heart-broken wail came from the lips of the aged mother, as she rocked herself to and fro. To him who told the tale, this calm seemed more sad than the wildest lamentations.

But all was not told yet. "My brother?" Annette's pale lips murmured.

"Madame, your noble brother is with God."

"Since when?"

"Since the second day of this month."

Then a strange and sudden change passed over the soul of Annette. He was no more her brother, the idol of her childhood and youth, the pride and joy of her maturer years; he was Christ's triumphant martyr, of whom she could think and speak calmly, as of St. Stephen or St. Paul. She could even wonder why the end had been delayed so long; usually, in such cases, a few days sufficed for the brief necessary formalities.

"Why did they keep him out of heaven for those long needless weeks?" she asked. Had she known all, she would have accounted those weeks, as many another had cause to do, a treasure beyond price; the crown of her brother's brief, but most fruitful ministry.

The young officer answered gently, "Madame, that life was precious, and there were many who desired to save it. It was thought hard that your brother should die by his own avowal, when no other legal proof existed that he had performed the functions of a minister. The Intendant referred the case to Versailles for special instructions. And in the mean time, promises, solicitations, entreaties were all exhausted to win from his lips the one brief word that would have saved him. Not even '*I recant*' was required of him. '*I doubt*', '*I will consider*', '*I desire instruction*', would have averted his doom."

Annette spoke bravely now. "And you, monsieur, who wear the king's uniform over a heart—I know it—of untarnished honour, what would you have thought of him had he uttered that word?"

"I can well understand, madame, a brave man's refusal to purchase life at the cost of honour. Pride—a noble pride—would sustain him. He would spurn the unworthy proposal from him with scorn; and hold himself, in dying, the conqueror of those who prayed him in vain to live. Not so your brother. He was ever serene and patient; full of sweet, self-forgetting courtesy, and of gratitude for what was kindly intended. He seemed to hold himself last and least of all, yet happier than all. Though he stood face to face with a cruel death, no man thought of pitying him. Rather it seemed as though he pitied those who sought to move him; but gently—in love, not in scorn. '*My lot is not sad*,' I have heard that he said; '*it is one to be desired*. I fear nothing; for the Lord is my Shepherd, my portion, my hope, and my strong fortress.\* The States of Languedoc, as you are probably aware, have just been

\* "Complainte sur la Mort de M. Lubac."

holding their assembly. The Bishop of Montpellier, and others of the higher clergy, often visited the captive, and tried their arguments and their eloquence."

"Cowards!" murmured some one—probably Desjours.

"Nay," said Annette; "I reproach not them, nor any. Yet monsieur can understand that to us it looks scarce heroic, or chivalrous, to bind an opponent hand and foot, to place the gibbet before his eyes, and then bid him contend for his faith."

"In such a contest, madame, I have no difficulty in understanding who is the hero. I am no theologian; the points in dispute were incomprehensible to me, and in no way interesting; but those better informed frankly praised your brother's learning and ability, and his modest, gentle self-possession. The Bishop of Montpellier spoke of him—and to him—with 'tenderness and affection.'"

"God reward him!" said Annette, almost surprised into natural emotion. "Christ say to him one day, 'I was in prison, and you visited Me.'

The young officer looked as though he too would gladly have claimed a share in that blessing; and, in truth, he might have done so. But even the most unreserved hold some things sacred, and consecrate them by silence. He went on: "The Intendant examined him several times; but at last, when the end drew near, he was obliged by order of the king, to ask him solemnly, in the name of Him whose presence he was about to enter, whether there was any foundation for the popular rumours which attribute disloyal designs to the Protestants. 'Have the Protestants a common treasury—a collection of weapons? Are they in correspondence with the English?' he asked. 'In all that,' M. Désubas replied, 'there is not a word of truth. The ministers preach nothing but patience, and fidelity to the king.' 'I am quite aware of it, monsieur,' was the Intendant's answer.

"A yet stranger thing took place when at last his sentence was read in the crowded court. I saw nothing as I looked

around save tearful faces ; judges, lawyers, soldiers, citizens—all alike were moved. Many a doom have the Intendant's lips pronounced, nor did they falter then. But he added an unwonted comment : ‘Such, monsieur, are the orders of the king ; but, I assure you, I condemn you with sorrow.’ ‘I know it, monsieur,’ the condemned answered calmly. My eyes were fixed and held by the noble serenity of his face, the only one there that had in it no sorrow—no regret. But presently there was a movement, as of surprise, amongst those around me, and a murmur passing along, ‘Look ! —M. l’Intendant.’ Then I looked from the prisoner to the judge, and I saw that he was weeping, like all the rest.\*

“Shall I go on, madame ? Have I told enough ?”

“Go on, monsieur. Your words bring comfort.”

The captain lowered his voice and half averted his face as he continued, “The place of death was the Esplanade.”

“Well we know that place ! From thence has many a martyr entered the joy of his Lord. Often did we talk — But go on, monsieur.”

“Though I was very near all the time, yet I have no word for you, madame. No spoken word. None could be heard, for the thunder of the fourteen great drums which were beaten without ceasing around him. But he did not look as though he heard the clamour. The calm that had been his throughout was changed to glory then. Even the bitter accompaniments of his doom that glory touched and transfigured. The uncovered head and feet, the white, shroud-like shirt (his only garb), the halter on the neck, threw out into stronger relief that form so noble, that face so full of beauty. He knelt down at the foot of the ladder, raised his eyes and hands to heaven, and prayed fervently. Then he bade courteous farewell to the Jesuits who attended him,

\* All this is literally true. Antoine Court expressed some natural doubts that a man usually so stern and pitiless as the Intendant Lenain could have been surprised into tears ; but he was obliged to accept the testimony of those who had witnessed the scene.

but asked them to allow him to die in peace, and gently put aside a crucifix they would have had him kiss. With quick steps he ascended the ladder ; but there was one more trial between him and heaven. He had to stand, awaiting death, while the executioner burned to ashes before his eyes the books and papers that had been found with him. It was a solemn pause. The drums thundered on loudly as ever ; but in the dense weeping multitude no man stirred or spoke. All looked their last on the still, white-robed figure, and the calm and radiant face that looked up straight to God. Then—at length—the end came. But I saw nothing ; nor am I ashamed of the tears that blinded me. And this I know—in all that great multitude you could not have guessed Catholic from Protestant. All wept alike.”\*

There was a silence, broken, to every one's surprise, by the voice of Madame Larachette repeating, with solemn fervour, “‘These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple ; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.’”

The young soldier bowed his head, and listened reverently to the sublime and sacred words. While Annette felt nothing except that her brother had entered heaven in triumph, leaving a long track of glory behind him. Presently she stretched out her cold white hand to Chantal. “We thank you,” she said. “You are kind to us. What is more, you were kind to him.”

“None could be otherwise,” Chantal said, raising her hand to his lips. “He won all hearts. For,” he added, “c’était un parfait honnête homme.” “Stainless gentleman” is, perhaps, the best English equivalent for this high meed

\* “Tout le monde, sans distinction de Protestants ou de Catholiques, fondait en larmes ; les premiers, bénissant Dieu de l’édification que leur donnait le martyr, et le second les félicitant de l’honneur que leur faisait le martyr.”—*Contemporary Memoir, written on the spot.*

of praise, won by the Pastor of the Desert from the strangers and enemies amongst whom he came to die.

"No thought of bitterness mingles with our sorrow," said Annette, still with the same strange calmness. "Even in death my brother makes peace. In those tears wept together, Protestants and Catholics will forget some old wrongs. And it will not be hard for us, who love him best, to forgive and pray for judges, bishops, Jesuits, who learned to love him too."

"The Catholics," Chantal answered, "spare not openly to comfort those of your religion, telling them of the honour the martyr has conferred upon their cause." After a long silence he resumed : "And now, madame, my errand here, as a private person, is done, or will be when I have handed you these letters."

He produced a pocket-book, from which he took two sealed letters, both addressed to Madame Meniet, at Mazel, near St. Argrève ; one in a free and flowing hand, the other cramped and awkward, betraying the imperfect penmanship of Jean Meniet. Annette knew both instantly. She took them with changing colour and trembling fingers, while the grateful words she tried to murmur died upon her lips.

"I wish, with all my heart," Chantal added, "that my business here, as a soldier, were ended also."

"I do not understand you, monsieur," said Annette faintly ; for already the sight and touch of those letters was breaking down her almost unnatural composure.

"Unhappily, madame, I am the unwilling bearer of the king's orders that this house should be dismantled and razed to the ground."

"Do not regret that, monsieur," Annette answered, growing calm once more. "Believe me, we do not. When we have given God our best and dearest, think you we could grudge Him dumb wood and stones, that neither feel nor suffer ?"

"What do *you* know about it, Annette Majal ?" suddenly interposed the shrill weak voice of Madame Larachette.

"You were not born nor baptised here, nor do your dead lie asleep in yonder garden. Mine do ; and soon I hoped my noble son would lay me to rest beside them there. Yet think you I mourn for house, or garden, or graves ? Not I ! God knows I hold them all scarce worth a hair of the fair head lying low this day. You know it too, Annette, though perhaps, I have said some bitter words I never meant. For it was he who taught me to look for a house not made with hands ; and if I enter there I shall owe it, under God, to him. But my son ! my son !—I shall go down to the grave mourning for my son ! M. l'officier, if your heart knows pity, ask the Intendant whether the ruin of this poor house, and the sending forth of mother and children shelterless into the cold world, be not punishment enough for the crime of opening our door to Majal. What would you have done, monsieur, if he had come to yours?"

"Mother, dear mother, hush !" Annette implored. "M. l'officier is kind and generous. He would help us if he could. Only God can do that. Let us turn to Him."

"At least," Chantal said, "I can take care that M. Meniet and the other captives lack nothing. You may be sure, mesdames, that every exertion will be made to soften their fate."

"We thank you, monsieur," Annette answered gently.

"One word more," Madame Larachette resumed. "It is the last you shall hear from these aged lips, perhaps too ready with words, when 'twere best to let the young speak instead. Nowadays, it is the young who know how to do everything—even to die. Tell those who sent you, M. l'officier, that it is easy to lay these walls in the dust ; but we thank God they cannot touch the house where Majal has found entrance and welcome now, for it is eternal in the heavens."

"Tell them, if you will, something more," Annette added. "We pray, as doubtless he prayed also, that for them too the golden gates of that home may open wide, through the availing intercession of the Saviour who redeemed him,

whose right hand held him up, and whose gentleness made him great."

Words the hearer did not understand, though he knew they were generous words of pardon and peace. He was spared the necessity of finding a reply. For Babette, thoughtful to the last for the honour of the poor doomed house, had left the room unobserved, taking Claude with her. The child now returned alone, bearing wine and wheaten bread, which, with shy grace, he offered to the soldier.

"You are the last stranger, M. l'officier," Annette said, "who shall ever break bread beneath this roof; and you honour it and us by doing so. Your sympathy has earned our warmest gratitude. Deign to think sometimes, whilst you are following your interest or your pleasure in courts and camps, that far away in the Desert a few poor proscribed Protestants are praying God night and day to keep you in all your ways, and to bless you with the best blessings He has to give."

"It is I who am grateful," Chantal answered. "Probably prayers are worth quite as much in French as in Latin."

It may have been to conceal some emotion that he bent down to caress little Claude, saying, "le petit bon homme" much resembled his father, and that he knew a great lady who would be "charmed—ravished" to have such a handsome boy as her little page of honour.

But—perhaps from some confused remembrance of the last visit of soldiers to their home—the child shrank from the caress, and his fair open brow darkened ominously. Annette drew him towards her, and averted the threatened storm by a gentle whispered word, and a few gentler touches. Then she asked "when monsieur would be obliged to carry out that order."

"I fear, the day after to-morrow," Chantal answered sadly. "I doubt that I can obtain a longer delay. Remove all you can, madame, and God go with you."

He bade Annette and the others a courteous and kindly

farewell, and prepared to take his departure. René waited upon him to the door, where they talked together for some minutes.

When René came back, all were standing round the chair of Madame Larachette. Hand was touching hand, eye looking into eye ; but as yet none had broken the solemn silence. Annette alone seemed to see nothing near. She was gazing, as in a trance, at something far away, unseen by all beside ; while little Claude looked up into her face, his own full of childlike awe and wonder.

As René rejoined the group, she said, " Let us give God thanks for our brother."

It was no longer " my brother," but "*our*"—Desjours's, René's, even little Madeleine's—in the same strong, sweet bond as " *our Father.*"

All knelt, even the invalid, drawing closer as they did so each to other. René took his place beside Madeleine, his hand softly touching hers.

Then the voice of Annette rose calm and clear : " Father, we bless Thee ! For our brother's blameless, holy life ; for his triumphant death, we bless Thee ! For all he was, and is, to us ; nay, rather, for all Thou wert, and art, to him, we bless Thee ! For the joy he had here in knowing Thee, in following Thee, in giving up all for Thee ; in toiling, in suffering, in dying for Thy name's sake, we bless Thee ! For the joy he has now in seeing Thee face to face, we bless Thee ! 'Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Thou hast prevented him with the blessings of goodness, Thou hast set a crown of pure gold upon his head. He asked' (nay, we asked for him, with what burning prayers and bitter tears, Thou knowest !)—we asked 'life of Thee, and Thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. His glory is great in Thy salvation, honour and majesty hast Thou laid upon him. For Thou hast made him most blessed for ever ; Thou hast made him exceeding glad with Thy countenance.'"

Thus the mourners thanked God, while yet they stood in the bright overshadowing cloud, on the holy mount, where heaven's gates were open, and white-robed saints came down and talked with them of suffering and of glory that should follow. But the vision and the ecstacy could not last. Too soon must time and nature resume their rights ; desolate, aching hearts be "left alone ;" and tear-dimmed eyes, "looking round about, see no man any more." Then indeed hearts would break and eyes fail, did not One remain still,—even "Jesus only, with themselves."

In thus retracing the story of an almost forgotten martyr—the contemporary of Whitfield and Wesley—the brush of fiction has been dipped into no colours save those of truth and fact. Gladly is it laid aside to borrow the historian's pencil, which sometimes lends its subject a severe and simple grace that all the painter's art fails to reproduce. The chronicler of the Pastors of the Desert, having told with what calm triumph Majal "trod the last steps that separated him from the living immortal Christ," concludes his story in these words : "Thus died, at the age of twenty-six, the minister Mathieu Majal-Désubas. His youth, his personal beauty, his intelligence, his gentleness, his serenity, his evangelical heroism, form, as it were, a luminous background, throwing out into full relief the figure of this martyr, the purest and the fairest of the Desert. Nothing is wanting to his glory. He obtained the regrets of Protestants and Catholics, of bishops and judges, of jailors and executioners; the popular poets celebrated his mournful triumph; and 'the angelic host,' to whom the ballad says, 'his spirit took its flight,' and 'whose melodies he longed to hear,' no doubt received him with palms and songs of victory."\*

Nay rather, He, whom in his bright, brief career, he had served so faithfully and followed so closely, "received him unto himself." For His words are true : "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be."

\* "Histoire des Pasteurs du Desert," par Napoléon Peyrat.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### "THE STRENGTH OF THE HILLS."

"There shall no tempest blow,  
No scorching noon tide heat;  
There shall be no more snow,  
No weary wandering feet.  
So we lift our trusting eyes  
From the hills our fathers trod  
To the quiet resting of the skies,  
To the Sabbath of our God."

TWO years have passed away since the Church of the Desert mourned over the grave of her fair and favourite son, Majal-Désubas, filling the glens and hamlets of the Cévennes and the Vivarais with "a long wail of anguish." \* It is a bright Sabbath morning, near the end of May, 1748. So genial is the sunshine, so balmy the air, even in the high altitude of the mountain cottage which was once the home of the elder, Paul Plans, that its inmates leave the door open, to enjoy more thoroughly the pleasant influences around them. Their occupation is serious, yet they fear no interruption. The solitude without is absolute. Their refuge is the secret place of the hills.

An aged woman and two children kneel in silence beside one who repeats in a clear sweet voice, a prayer used by the proscribed Protestants of France in their private Sabbath worship. "Oh, great God," Annette

\* Coqueril, "Églises du Désert."

Meniet prays, "whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, but who hast promised to be wherever two or three are gathered together in Thy name, Thou seest us assembled in this house to offer to thee our religious homage, to adore Thy greatness, and to implore Thy compassion. We mourn in secret to be deprived of our public services, and no longer to hear in our temples the voice of Thy servants. But, far from murmuring against Thy providence, we acknowledge that Thou mightest in Thy justice overwhelm us with Thy most severe judgments; therefore, in the midst of Thy chastenings we adore Thy goodness, yet we entreat of Thee to have pity upon us. We are without a temple, but fill this house with Thy presence. We are without a pastor, but be Thyself our Pastor. Instruct us in the truths of Thy gospel. We are about to read and meditate upon Thy Word. Imprint it on our hearts. Make us to learn in it to know Thee—both what Thou art and what we are; what Thou hast done for our salvation, and what we ought to do for Thy service; the virtues that are acceptable to Thee, and the vices Thou dost forbid; the punishments with which Thou dost threaten the impenitent, the lukewarm, the timid, the fearful, and the profane, and the glorious recompense Thou dost promise the faithful. Make us to go forth from this little exercise more holy, more zealous for Thy glory and for Thy truth, more detached from the world, more religious observers of Thy commandments. Hear us, for Thy Son's sake."

If these and other equally beautiful words of prayer and praise, had but come to us from Christians of the Third Century, holding their proscribed worship in the Catacombs, instead of from nameless peasants of the Eighteenth, keeping the same faith upon the mountains of Languedoc, they would excite universal admiration and enthusiasm. But when will the Churches of the Reformation learn to estimate and to use aright their boundless wealth of inspiring memories, and their truly magnificent martyrologies?

Before the prayer was ended, all but Annette were aware of a shadow thrown across the floor of the cottage by an approaching figure. Little Claude, the first to rise from his knees, ran to the door, and was immediately caught in the arms of a tall, sunburnt, handsome young man. René Plans was now an accredited agent and messenger of the Desert Church of the Hautes Cévennes. He was in his nineteenth year, but he looked much older. His dark curling hair, his keen intelligent eye, his slight, well-knit muscular frame, betokened health and energy; and if already he enjoyed, as he probably did, the perilous distinction of having his "signalement" in the hands of the police, he was no doubt favourably described therein as "joli homme."

Annette's hand was placed in his, with the full trust of tried friendship. Madeleine's greeting was like hers; but his strong fingers closed over that small white hand with more of protecting tenderness. He used greater ceremony towards Madame Larachette, raising her hand to his lips.

His quick eye took note of changes in them all; for it was more than a year since his last brief visit to the cottage which had been the home of his childhood. Madame Larachette's health was restored, but her face wore a strained, excited look, too plainly indicating jarred and shattered nerves. Claude was growing quickly into a healthy, happy mountain boy; apparently cast by nature in a strong mould, but kept gentle by the influence of a gentle mother. Madeleine's sweet face wore a dreamy, thoughtful air; and her eyes, deep and blue as the Cévenol sky, shone with a perilous lustre. A child's religion, stimulated by excitement, or ripened by suffering into precocious maturity, is like a bud unfolded too early; a thousand subtle dangers await it. Many a strange legend of the infant prophets and prophetesses of the Camisard war still lingered in the mountains of Languedoc; and amongst Madeleine's own kindred there had been a prophetess of local celebrity, Marie Désubas. Easily might the sensitive, highly-strung nature of the

imaginative child have been roused to similar fanaticism by constant brooding over her father's captivity, her uncle's martyrdom, and the wrongs of her people. But a wise and tender mother was at hand to guide, control, and direct ; and it was due to her that Madeleine's grave and thoughtful childhood was ripening quietly and safely into a pure and lovely maidenhood.

Annette Meniet looked frail and worn, and the hand that held René's was transparent. Her life was too full, not of thought only, but of toil. She performed, with Madeleine's assistance, all the duties of the ménage, waited upon Madame Larachette, taught her children, and ministered in various ways to the villagers of Trou. Moreover, every spare moment of the day, and much of the night, was spent in labour for her captive husband, that cold and hunger might not be added to the affliction of his bonds ; for although the Church ministered nobly to the confessors at the galleys, they were many, and her resources small. So Annette, like the Cévenol peasants amongst whom she lived now, carded and spun the wool which, woven into coarse cloth, formed almost the only export of the district. Many a weary hour of toil was lightened by the thought that the livres thus earned meant, for her husband, wholesome food instead of beans or black bread, a warm vest beneath the meagre red serge jacket of the *forçat*, occasional deliverance from his galling fetters, perhaps even the luxury of a "strapontin," or narrow mattress, upon which to rest his weary frame.

She had passed through her hour of dejection and despondency ; and no one, not even Madeleine, had known half its bitterness. Now she was "on the other side." There was no time for tears, nor much desire to shed them now. That cry of the heart, for "the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still," was changing into a deep, mysterious, ever-present sense of communion with her sainted dead. Strong, silent influences were drawing her unawares towards the unseen shore—the home whither he

had gone before. All who knew her said, "She need not mourn ; she will soon see him"—*him* whose name they all breathed "softly, like the household name of one whom God hath taken."

Yet she herself did not think this. She would have been surprised to hear it. She would have prayed for life, and that earnestly. For in her heart there was a dream, a half-formed wish, that could scarcely yet be called a purpose. The face she most desired to see again was not the fair face of the martyred brother, now shining in the light of God.

After the first greetings and inquiries were over, Madame Larachette remarked, with a glance at René's dusty, travel-stained apparel, "I do not call it an honest practice, or one tending to the edification of the faithful, for a godly young man, a messenger of the Church and a candidate for the ministry, to run to and fro, and make his journeys on the Lord's day."

"You are right, madame," René answered. "But I am now upon an errand of mercy ; so I confess, and without penitence, that I have travelled all night, and that I intend to go on to Genouilhac as soon as I have told my tidings, and breakfasted with you."

"What ? Will you not even go and see your sister ?"

For young Brissac and Jeannette were married now, and lived in the village, with the parents of Jacques.

"I may see her for a moment," René said ; "but I must not tarry."

"Is anything amiss with—our friends ?" Annette questioned, anxiously.

"With our friends at Toulon, nothing, dear madame. They are in good health, and God be thanked, of good cheer also. On account of the war, the galleys are kept armed and equipped, and sometimes they make voyages ; but M. Meniet's galley, 'Le Victorieux,' has not as yet been engaged in active service."

"Tell us all you know of him, dear René," said Annette, eagerly, and with changing colour.

René hesitated a moment. Little Claude, standing at his knee, was listening, open-eared, and with large eyes full of wonder, to the tidings of his father, the galley-slave. Was it well that the child should hear all? It *was* well. He would but honour that father the more for weakness which made manifest in him the strength of Christ.

"Dear mother," he said, gently, "I will not hide from you aught of what M. Meniet has told me. He says all this came upon him first as a fearful, unexpected, stunning blow. Never once had he dreamed such a lot might be his. 'I followed Christ at a distance,' he said to me. 'I thought to live in ease and comfort, and to die among my own people;—but they compelled me to bear his cross.' And the cross was heavy. During the first days of imprisonment at Vernoux, he had well-nigh fainted beneath it. But God, who comforteth them that are cast down, comforted him by what he calls 'that blessed journey to Montpellier.' Even yet he can scarcely speak of it; nor can I. You can guess how one, already almost in heaven, ministered tenderly to his suffering brother, whose lot, he always said, was far more painful than his own. And then, like the prophet of old when he saw his master taken up, M. Meniet felt as though he too could do wonders in the same strength. The hardships of the long march with the 'chain' of convicts to Toulon—(mother, I need not describe them; you already know too much) were all endured in this brave and cheerful spirit. But the clouds returned after the rain. The first weeks on the galley were hard to bear. 'It was not the bodily suffering,' he said. 'The iron that entered into my soul was the companionship of degraded criminals—the oaths, the blasphemies with which the benches resounded.' He could not use the coarse fare given him; his health failed; he longed for death, and thought it not far distant. But God had not forsaken him. Not all at once, but gradually, He sent him help from the Sanctuary, and strengthened him out of Zion. Some of our friends provided wholesome food for the body, and words of

comfort for the sinking heart. His health improved, he became inured to the hardships of his lot, and custom enabled him to withdraw his mind from the sights and sounds around him. When I first saw him he was growing used to handle the oar. The comité of his galley is called a hard man ; yet while raining blows on all the rest, he never strikes a Huguenot ; for he says that, if they must go to hell, it is only fair to allow them as much comfort as they can have in this world.” \*

Annette's murmured “Thank God” came from depths of pain and patience, only to be fathomed by those who know all she knew of the horrors often endured by the Protestant galley-slaves.

René resumed, more cheerfully, “M. Meniet has recently been made ‘vogue.’ ”

“What is that ?” asked Claude, whose attention had never flagged.

“Captain of his oar. He sits on the top bench, and has therefore the longest pull ; but he is allowed many small indulgences, such as leave to go on shore, and to buy his own provisions and those of his companions. You may be sure, madame, that his strength is quite restored, or he could not keep the post.”

“God be praised for his mercy and his truth shown to his suffering servant,” Annette said, gently. “But René, you did not deny that you had heavy tidings. Whence are they ?”

“From the forests of Gabre, whence heavy tidings have so often come to us of late.”

Annette grew pale. “The pastor—the brave young Grenier de Barmont ?” she questioned, with breathless anxiety.

“Safe still, thank God ; and still ministering, with undiminished zeal to all the churches of Foix. Doubtless the

\* A fact, told of the comité of the gallery “La Palme,” in the “Autobiography of a French Protestant condemned to the Galleys for his Religion.”

prayers of his father, Christ's noble confessor at the galleys, are heard in his behalf. But a young man, who was acting as his messenger, has been arrested lately, and proves to be a friend of ours—Jean Desjours."

Every one started. Madame Larachette was the first to speak.

"And what brought him there?" she asked, very naturally.

"The hope of finding concealment and occupation in the manufactories of our brethren, the glass-makers of Foix. He was arrested under a feigned name; but, unfortunately he thought it right to confess all when examined by the Intendant of Auch, who has had him transferred to Montpellier, to the jurisdiction of M. Lenain. But he is absent now, so that there must be at least some delay."

"And what, think you, will be—the end?" asked Annette, very anxiously.

"I cannot tell, mother. I fear the worst," René answered, sadly.

Annette was greatly moved. "Oh, René! can nothing be done for him?—nothing?" she murmured, with quivering lips.

"Dear mother, I mean to try. That is the secret of my haste to-day. I must go to Genouilhac, and see Pasteur Roux. His permission gained, I will ride night and day to Montpellier, seek out M. de Chantal, and implore him to use his influence with the Intendant, and save a brave man from suffering for—what *he* at least will account—a very generous and pardonable error."

"How will you get a horse?" asked Claude, much interested.

"M. Brissac will gladly lend one for such a service."

"Then," said Annette, rising, "you must take food at once. I ought to have thought of it before."

"I have interrupted your worship," said René.

"Mercy before sacrifice, my son."

While she set bread, meat, and wine upon the table; Madeleine whispered a word to Claude.

"Look, René," said the child; "I can run to the village, and ask M. Brissac for the horse for you. He will send it to the rye-field corner, where the path strikes off for Genouilhac, and that will save you two or three miles."

"An excellent plan!" cried René, well pleased. "Brave boy, Claude! Run thy quickest, my son."

Madeleine fetched his cap, and his mother cautioned him not to tell his errand to any save the Brissacs. He was gone in a moment, and René was enabled by this arrangement to enjoy at his leisure the refreshment he greatly needed. Annette would have had him indulge in an hour's sleep; but of this he would not hear. He ate and drank with the keen appetite of youth and health, then joined his friends in a brief prayer, took an affectionate farewell of them, and started on his journey.

"Am I too late?" he asked anxiously as he rode along by rye-field and chestnut grove.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### "NO MARTYR."

"I am not eager, bold, or strong—  
All that is past;  
I'm ready not to do,  
At last—at last.

"My half day's work is done,  
And that is all my part;  
I bring my patient God  
A patient heart."

**I**N a prison room within the citadel of Montpellier, Jean Desjours sits alone. He is older, by two years of peril and wandering, than when we saw him last. The tawny hair shades a face sharpened by suffering, but also refined by thought. The spare, muscular frame still betokens strength and energy; but the restlessness of former days seems gone. He is changed indeed, or he could not have remained, for full half an hour—his head resting on his hand—without looking up, without even moving.

But at last the captive roused himself, removed his hand, and gazed steadily at the blank, white prison wall before him.

"To-morrow!" he murmured, half aloud. "Yes, to-morrow.—So soon!—Before another sun sets! Strange—sad! And yet——"

Breaking off suddenly, and, as it seemed, from a new impulse, he turned his attention to the writing materials, with which, at his earnest request, he had been furnished.

With the old impetuosity, he dashed his pen into the ink-horn, and in eager haste began to write. But he found the task more difficult than he expected. Even the mechanical part was an unaccustomed labour; moreover, in that hour of supreme emotion, neither thoughts nor words would obey the summons of his will. After several unavailing efforts, he threw down the pen with a gesture of impatience, and once more covering his face with his hands, he burst into passionate tears.

But presently, hearing the key grate in the door, he made haste to recover himself and remove the traces of his weakness. "If this be priest or Jesuit, he shall find me ready for him," thought Jean Desjours; and, in as cheerful a tone as he could assume at the moment, he began to chant a psalm:—

"I'll Thee extol, my God, O King!  
I'll bless Thy Name always."

But it was no priest or Jesuit who came to visit him in this hour of extremity; it was a dear and faithful friend. The next moment René Plans and Jean Desjours were clasped in each other's arms. The compassionate jailor left them alone; no elaborate precautions were thought necessary now, for this captive was not a beloved and honoured pastor whom a thousand eager hearts were burning to deliver. It was some time before either found voice to speak; but at last René broke the silence.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;—as you are doing now, Jean Desjours," he said.

"I! What is my life worth? Yet I own my weakness, René. Just now I felt a pang of regret. I am young still; life is sweet. A man always thinks coming days may bring hope and cheer; unite old friends—perhaps fulfil old dreams."

"Dear friend, we have tried to save you; but it was not the will of God."

"Ah! you tried?" said Desjours, with a bright and grateful look. "You did not forget me?"

"Could you think it? I came hither for the purpose, and by desire of the pastors; and I hoped much from the interference of M. de Chantal—you remember him, Desjours? Unhappily, he has been ordered to Toulon, with his regiment. Then I sought out M. Amiel—a Nicodemist, but a man of much influence, and very useful to the Church."

"Yes; I know him. He procured me an advocate, and has shown me many kindnesses; but from the first my fate was sealed. The Intendant determined I should die."

"Yet he wept over the man you die for! Remembering those tears, I would not give up hope, nor be dissuaded, by all M. Amiel's arguments, from the attempt to throw myself at his feet and plead for you. I did it. He heard me to the end, and with more forbearance than might have been expected. He was not harsh or cruel—he was even compassionate; but he was inexorable."

"And the risk to yourself! René, you are a brave boy. God bless you!" said Desjours, grasping his hand. "But I verily believe M. l'Intendant is right," he resumed after a pause, and with a tone and manner not devoid of excitement. "What else could he do with me, after all? Send me to the galleys? No, not *that*; for some day, in spite of prayers and struggles, the old Adam would have got the upper hand, and you would have heard of my knocking the argousin\* on the head, or flinging him into the sea; and that would have brought reproach upon the Name I bear. While now—" his voice grew low, even tender, "Now, I have just a few hours of waiting here, then a moment's agony, and then—I shall enter the kingdom of heaven. I shall see—" he paused, and René waited anxiously for the concluding word. It came. "I shall see Christ my Saviour!" said Jean Desjours.

\* Officer who used to keep order amongst the galley slaves.

"Through whose blood alone you hope to find welcome there?"

"What need for *me* to say that?" Desjours asked, with the old quick motion of the restless head. "If the sainted martyr who passed in there triumphant had yet no other plea, what else could avail for a poor, ignorant, sinful lad, who can hardly, looking back on his whole life, find one thing not to be ashamed of, save that he knew a saint and hero when he saw him, and loved him with all his heart?"

"That you certainly did."

"I do. Standing here, face to face with death, I grow strong and calm when I think of him. There come back to me the old happy days when I used to be his guide up the mountain paths. How we crushed the soft snow with our free, active feet! How we looked up to the great white peaks, so far away, beyond the clouds in the deep blue sky! How we talked together! Ah! those talks.—But why say all this? I shall see him to-morrow night. No, René; I have no regrets now. The advocate M. Amiel retained for me said it was hard I should die for a fault committed more than two years ago. It is not hard! It would have been too much honour for such as I to die for my Lord; it is honour enough to die for His servant. And as for those last two years, if there are years in heaven it will take me a hundred to thank God for giving them to me. Suppose He had let me have my wayward will, and be taken at the gate of Vernoux, it would only have wrung our martyr's heart with one pang the more. But where he is now no pang can enter—no sorrow; not even for another's sorrow, strange as that is to think of him. While for me, in those two years I have just had time to learn by heart one more verse; that which follows what you said just now."

"'Ye are my friends?'" said René.

"Yes. I have learned that He who died lives—is not the Saviour only, but the Friend. That one can go to

Him, perplexed, in trouble, without a guide or friend on earth, and He will show the way, and lead the feet therein. But we do not learn this until the chosen guide and friend walks no more beside us here. Dost thou understand, René?"

René did understand. He had come to comfort; but he was being comforted himself; and he said so.

"Have many assaults been made upon your faith?" he inquired presently of the captive.

"A few; though, I doubt not, my insignificance has saved me some trouble. At my first coming, a Jesuit was kind enough to visit me. After some controversy, he began to promise to procure me a free pardon as the price of apostasy; but I told him—a little hotly, as I think now—that they had a right to hang me if they pleased, but none to treat me as a wretch without honour or conscience. To-day, after I had heard the sentence, came another with the like proposals."

"Well; and what said you?"

"That I had deserved little enough at the hands of my gracious God, yet I thought too highly of His loving-kindness and His truth to fear that He would forsake me at my dying hour."

"And that was nobly said, my friend."

"Ah, René, friend; how the moments fly! They will come for thee ere I have said half. And I have wasted hours and days so often, with no thought of their value! René, I wish to write my will; but I have not skill enough to frame it. Wilt thou do it for me? Here are pens and paper."

"But, my friend——"

"Yes, I know I have nothing to leave; and if I had, any will I could write would be waste paper. But I am thinking of my cousin Philippe. No doubt the poor lad has many a bitter thought that what is his should have been mine, and that if it had—— Well, let that rest; all is best as it is—for me—— And he must bear his burden;

God loves him too well to let him go scatheless. But I would fain lighten that burden while I may; so I pray thee, write down in plain words that I, Jean Desjours, give and bequeath all I have, and all rights and claims of mine, to my dear cousin Philippe Desjours. It will have no value in a court of law; but some in the court of conscience. Besides, it may help to clear Philippe in the eyes of Messieurs les Pasteurs. Entreat of them from me, René, to remove his excommunication, if they have not done so already."

René thought Philippe might find his severest punishment in the magnanimity of his injured cousin; but he wrote down what Desjours directed, simply and without comment. "Shall I add anything more?" he asked.

"Only that I die in charity with all men; and in steadfast hope of eternal life, through the mercy of God in Christ. Commend me to Madame Meniet and her children, and to the Lorins—say I thought of them to the last." He paused for a moment, almost overcome by fast thronging memories; then he resumed calmly, "René, this little book, my mother's Testament, is the only possession I have left now. Take it thou, from dying hands."

"Thanks, dear friend. If God enable me to fulfil my vow and to become a faithful minister of His Word, thy voice shall speak from it to me, and to the people."

"There is one page," said Desjours, "at which the book falls open of itself."

"And a verse there marked with blood. That shall be the text of my first sermon, God willing."

"One thing more, René Plans. Thank God, I do not fear the morrow. Yet I am not so strong that I need not a friendly face beside me to the last. Thou knowest I am no martyr; only a poor man who dies for his own fault. So, I pray thee, be near me to the end. Stand where I can see thy face."

"Trust me, dear friend. But Another will stand by thee in that hour. And thou shalt see His face with joy."

"Joy is for saints and martyrs. Humble trust and hope are enough for me. René, thou hast the tongue of the learned; kneel down and pray that these may be given."

This was René's first prayer beside the dying. The words were broken and faltering; but there was that in them whereby words that come from a great deep within, like cold waters from the heart of the earth, may always be distinguished from common words.

Nobly, the next day, did he redeem his promise to Jean Desjours. He saw a brave man meet death calmly, without triumph and without fear. "No martyr," as he said himself, only a peasant of the Vivarais who died gladly for the pastor he loved. No great interest was awakened by his fate at the time; no fame surrounds it now: too many sufferers more illustrious have claimed the sympathy of the Church; too many names more heroic are inscribed on the blood-stained pages of her history. He was but one of an innumerable multitude who were indirectly—though really—the victims of persecuting violence, scarcely entitled to the crown and palm-branch of the self-devoted martyr, yet sure of recognition and recompense from the martyr's Lord for whatever was truly done or suffered "unto Him."\*

\* The fate of Desjours is historical. He was executed at Montpellier, June 10th, 1748.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### A DREAM AND A SONG.

“The bride eyes not her garment,  
But her dear bridegroom’s face;  
I will not look on glory,  
But on my King of grace :  
Not on the crown He giveth, •  
But on His piercèd hand ;  
The Lamb is all the glory  
Of Immanuel’s land.”

IT was a simple, pure, laborious life that the Cévennol peasants led in those days. If the English poet had sought out their lonely mountain huts he would scarcely have given utterance to the complaint that “plain living and high thinking are no more.” Yet they rarely felt the bitter extremities of hunger. They had few luxuries, except the assembly, the prêche, and the chanted psalm (costly ones, it is true, for them); but they had always enough and to spare of rye-bread, or chestnuts boiled in milk, whilst famine after famine swept like desolating floods over the fertile plains of their native land. Literally, the persecuted Cévennol “dwelt on high ; his place of defence was the munition of rocks : bread was given him, and his water was sure.”

The pleasant hum of the bees came in through the open door of the Elder’s cottage, as it used to do long ago at the farmhouse of Mazel ; for Annette had brought a colony of these busy little workers from her old home, and was very skilful and successful in their management. Farther

off, the tinkle of the sheep-bells from the hills was faintly heard. Within, Madame Larachette sat in her arm-chair, carding wool; Annette was at the spinning-wheel, and Madeleine moved about preparing supper. The young girl's brown hair looked golden in the evening light; but it would have been well if she had borrowed also some of the roses from the sunset clouds, for her cheek was pale and her face anxious. She stepped very softly from place to place; for the busy whir of her mother's wheel had ceased, and Annette was leaning back in her chair, overcome by the brief fitful slumber of weariness. And while she slumbered, a look of rest that Madeleine loved to see stole over her worn features. Their expression was not sad—there was no pain, no trouble there; but it was that of one who had borne the burden and heat of the day—a long, hard day of toil and care.

Suddenly a clear, sweet, childish voice came ringing up the path, and filling the evening air with many a birdlike trill and quaver:—

“A robe of glory splendid  
I shall with joy put on,  
When the battle here has ended  
And the victory is won.”

So much of little Claude's song had reached his sister's ears ere she could hasten to the open door and silence him by a gesture.

And thus Annette was awakened from a happy dream of a crystal sea, flushed rose-red by the sunset sky, and of one tall, stately ship, with white glistening sails, lying becalmed on its bosom. Unconsciously she murmured half aloud the words which had suggested the dream, and which her slumbering fancy had warped from their literal meaning, “The glorious Lord shall be unto her a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars.” It was a trait that mingled in all Annette's visions of the happy land, there shall go “no galley with oars.” But presently awakening fully to the things around her, she

inquired, "Is that Claude?—I am glad he has come home so early."

Claude bounded in, kissed his mother, and put into her hand a little bag of silver. He had been trusted, for the first time, to go alone to Neyrac, a neighbouring village, to sell some yarn, and he was very proud of his independence and his success. Annette praised his diligence, and asked if he was tired. "Oh no, mother," he said. "It has been a grand day. Every one was so good to me. And I learned a new song; such a glorious one! Let me sing it for you."

"We can wait for it till thou hast had thy supper, my child. Madeleine, are the chestnuts ready?"

"Yes, mother; quite." She laid on the board the smoking dish that contained their evening meal—fare much more wholesome and nourishing than artificial and highly-seasoned food. But Claude did more ample justice to it than any one else that night.

Still, it was hard to keep silence about his song until supper was over, and thanks were gravely returned by Annette. Noticing his eagerness, she opened the subject herself: "How didst thou find time to learn a song to-day?" she asked.

"I was waiting a long time for M. Mericourt to come home and pay me for the yarn," he said. "His daughters gave me my dinner, and then they sat working, and singing at their work. When I knew what they sang I made them teach it to me. Not all—for it is long; but all the grand part at the end. Listen, mother, and grandmother, and Madeleine!" The child's clear treble rang through the cottage:

"Grieve not for me," said Lubac,  
"Nor be my fate deplored——"

But the hearts of his hearers thrilled with emotion, which the little singer had no power to comprehend.

"Hush!" said Annette. The word was spoken very gently; but her cheek flushed and faded, and flushed again,

with intense feeling. She drew the boy to her side, and passed her arm round him. "Claude," she whispered, "who is it they call 'Lubac'?"

Claude's bold, handsome face assumed its best and softest look as he answered, "Mother, I know. He held me in his arms."

"Do not sing. Say the words low and reverently, like holy words."

The child obeyed ; and, scarcely understanding either the sorrow or the triumph that breathed in them, repeated the noble words which sprang fresh from the heart of some unknown peasant poet of Languedoc a hundred years ago :

"'Grieve not for me,' said Lubac,

'Nor be my late deplored ;

No more I fear what waits me here,

My shepherd is the Lord.

He is my portion ever ;

In Him will I confide ;

My hope that faileth never,

My Rock in which I hide.

"'Awake, my soul ! take courage !

Behold, this very day

He bids thee burst thy bondage

And soar to Him away ;

Away—where round thee, thrilling,

Heaven's symphonies ascend ;

The heart with rapture filling,

'Mid glory without end.

"'With holy angels joining

In concert thou wilt sing ;

Thy voice with theirs combining

To praise the eternal King.

A robe of glory splendid

Thou wilt with joy put on,

When the battle here has ended

And the victory is won.

"'Then come, my heart, awaken !

The fated hour has come ;

With constancy unshaken,

Prepare to meet thy doom.

Go forth with zeal anointed,  
 Look up with steadfast gaze ;  
 That scaffold is appointed  
 Thy soul to heaven to raise !'

"While archer-guards surround him,  
 To meet his fate he comes,  
 And loudly thunder round him  
 Twice seven resounding drums.  
 With impotent endeavour  
 To shake his mind they try ;  
 Serene and calm as ever  
 Goes Lubac forth to die !

"And now upon the scaffold  
 The noble martyr stands ;  
 And to the King of heaven  
 Lifts up his eyes and hands.  
 The ladder set before him  
 He mounts without dismay,  
 And to meet the angels o'er him  
 His spirit soars away.

" 'Twas thus our faithful Pastor  
 Fulfilled his honoured course,  
 And found beside his Master  
 True joy's eternal source.  
 How blessed is thy portion !  
 How perfect is thy rest !  
 What tongue can tell the joys that dwell  
 In the country of the blest !

"Cease then your lamentation,  
 True Protestants each one,  
 Nor mourn in desolation  
 For the loved one who is gone.  
 No longer grieve for Lubac,  
 Nor be his fate deplored ;  
 No wish nor fear disturbs him here—  
 His portion is the Lord !

"His memory will fire us  
 To emulate his zeal ;  
 His ardour will inspire us  
 As long as hearts can feel.

And if through tribulations  
God seeks our strength to try,  
With Lubac's faith and patience  
Oh may we live and die!"\*

It is easy to imagine the effect of verses such as these, said or sung at their firesides or in their proscribed assemblies, by those who could say of the martyrs they commemorate, "He held me in his arms;" "He baptized me;" or, "He taught me the truths he died for."

Claude's bright young face glowed with enthusiasm; for what a child's intellect can scarce apprehend a child's heart can feel to its depths. Madame Larachette and Madeleine were weeping; but Annette seemed the least moved of all. "Yes, Claude," she said at length, "those words are beautiful. But they are not his words."

Claude looked surprised and disappointed; and Madeleine said, through her tears, "Surely now, dear mother, he hears the angels' song—he wears the 'robe of glory splendid.'"

"He does, my child. But I doubt if, even yet, he has given it one look, for the joy of gazing on the face of Christ. Not the glory, or the victory, or the angels' song, but Christ Himself was 'all his salvation, and all his desire.'" Annette's pale cheek was dyed now with a crimson flush, and her face had the look it wore on the day of Chantal's visit.

No change in that face escaped the anxious eyes of Madeleine. "Dear mother," she said, "you have been weary all day; and we rose early, you remember? May we not have prayer, and go to rest?"

"Yes, my child. Bring the Bible, and we will read together those words of the Psalmist: 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but

\* "Complainte et Récit Véritable de la Mort de M. Lubac." Translated by M. A. S. M.

God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.'"

As Madeleine heard the words, a pang of apprehension, keen though unconfessed, shot through her heart. There was that in them which seemed far more true of her who uttered them on earth, than of him who knew all their blessed meaning now in heaven.

But meanwhile there lay forgotten, in the pocket of Claude's little blouse, a cordial of stronger efficacy to restore the failing heart of the wife and mother than any that could have been prescribed even by the celebrated physicians of Montpellier.

## CHAPTER XX.

### A PARCEL OF LETTERS.

“And oh! the joy that cometh in the morning,  
Brightly victorious o'er the hours of care;  
I have not watched in vain, serenely scorning  
The wild and busy whisperings of despair.  
Thou hast sent tidings.”

C LAUDE'S little pallet of dried grass lay in the kitchen and general keeping-room of the cottage. His mother remained, as her custom was, to hear him repeat his evening verse and prayer; while in the other chamber Madeleine helped her grandmother to prepare for the hour of rest.

His prayer over, Claude unfastened the belt of his blouse, and, preparing to take it off, felt something weighty in the pocket. “Oh, mother!” he exclaimed, “here is a letter M. Mericourt gave me for you. He says it was sent to him from St. Argrève. I forgot it until this moment. I am very sorry.”

Annette chided him gently: “Careless child! And it might have been a matter of life and death!” she said, as she took from his hand a thick packet carefully secured with tape, and with a lavish expenditure of sealing-wax.

She glanced at the superscription, recognising it immediately, and with little interest save that which the arrival of any letter could not fail to excite in a life so secluded and monotonous. Of all the handwritings she knew, she cared least to see that of M. Cabanis, a worthy advocate of St. Argrève, who, before she left Mazel, had urged upon her

the duty of claiming, for her children's sake, the "wife's third" of her husband's property, mercifully left in many of the confiscations "on account of religion" for the support of the bereaved family. Annette Meniet had strong reasons for making no such claim. She considered she had been treated with forbearance and lenity. Had the Edicts been carried out to the letter, she would have been immured for life in the gloomy tower of Constance or in some convent, and her hapless children consigned to Catholic schools; and she dreaded any movement that might attract the attention of the authorities, or provoke them to open the eyes they had been willing to close. Moreover, her conduct in making such a claim might be construed as a tacit denial of her share in her husband's crime—the crime of sheltering her brother!—and she was ready to suffer any loss rather than stoop to such a baseness.

She broke the numerous seals, expecting to find nothing within but a long and useless expostulation from M. Cabanis. But she soon saw that his letter enclosed several others, sent doubtless to the well-known address of the lawyer, as the best means of securing their safe transmission to her. One of them stirred her curiosity, for it was written on the finest paper, secured with green silk, and sealed with what looked like a nobleman's crest. Another bore a superscription in a well-known hand—that of René Plans. She broke its seal first, and read as follows:—

" Dear Mother,—I hoped to visit you this autumn, perhaps to spend with you part of the winter; but God wills otherwise. 'Nos Messieurs' have concluded to send me abroad immediately, for the better prosecution of their affairs, and of my own; and they have generously supplied me with all that is necessary for the journey. Have the goodness to communicate this to my sister, and to say that I commend myself with the most sincere affection to her and to my brother-in-law. Our poor friend, whose fate inspired you with such interest, is gone where he wished to go, and

is with Him whom he most desired to see. His end was noble and Christian, and we shall do better to give thanks than to weep for him. M. de Chantal is now at Toulon ; you will be glad to learn this, for certain reasons. Embrace Claude for me ; kiss the hands of Madame Larachette and Madeleine, and commend me to all our friends. And thus I remain, dear Madame, your obedient son and servant, R. PLANS. Given at Alais, at the inn of the 'Crown and Sceptre,' August 19th, 1748."

As Annette finished reading this quaint and formal but significant letter, Madeleine entered the room.

"René is gone to the seminary at Lausanne," Annette told her. "Messieurs les Pasteurs have given him the recommendations, and the funds for his journey." For this, as she well understood, was the true meaning of the cautiously-worded intimation, intended, if it fell into unfriendly hands, to give the impression that the heads of some mercantile house were sending the writer abroad as their clerk or agent.

Madeleine stood for a moment in silent thought, still holding the little lamp in her hand. Then, laying it on the table, she came to her mother's side. "It is what he longed for," she said ; "he will be very glad, mother." But Annette was now breaking the crested seal of the mysterious silk-bound letter. From an envelope, differing little from those now in use, she drew forth a number of enclosures. The first that caught her eye was a letter from a banker in Toulon to M. Singlin, banker, St. Argève, requesting him, "on sight of these presents," to pay the bearer a considerable sum of money. But she only spent a moment wondering what this might mean ; for Madeleine picked up a fragment of paper which had fallen on the ground, and, recognising the handwriting, uttered a cry of surprise and emotion. The brief, precious words were quickly read by the mother and both the children. Jean Menet wrote from the "Bagne," or convict prison of Toulouse :—

" My dear Wife,—They will tell thee, perhaps, that I am very ill. Do not believe it. I have been ill, and nigh unto death ; but God has had mercy on me, and brought me back from the gates of the grave. I recover day by day. Could I see thy face, in four-and-twenty hours I would be strong as ever. Since, however, such is not the will of God, His will be done in all things. I commend thee and my children to Him, and remain thy faithful friend,  
J. MENIET."

The straggling, undecided writing, and the blotted paper, bore witness all too plainly to the writer's bodily weakness.

Annette grew pale and faint with the sudden shock. But for the strong habit of self-control her life had taught her, she might have swooned. She did not move or speak ; while Madeleine turned eagerly to the remaining letters for further information. Nor was she disappointed : a kindly, compassionate letter bearing a cross, and the signature, " Catherine, fille de St. Vincent de Paul," informed them that the " *forçat M. Meniet*" (as he was rather incongruously styled), having been with the other convicts employed in the labour of building the new arsenal, had unfortunately met with a serious accident. Through the awkwardness or feebleness of the fellow-prisoner to whom he was chained, a heavy stone, which both were lifting together, slipped and fell upon him, injuring him severely. He was taken at once to the prison hospital, and afforded medical and surgical aid ; but fever set in, and his recovery, for some time, seemed doubtful. Of late, however, a favourable change had taken place in his condition. The writer, with another Sister of the Order, had been in attendance on him throughout, and madame might be sure he had received every care. In his delirium he had often spoken of her, of his children Madeleine and Claude, and of a dear brother, whose name could not be distinctly caught. The physician had now pronounced him out of danger, but he was still very weak.

With no more comment upon what Madeleine read than a long, deep-drawn, shuddering sigh, Annette herself took up, with trembling fingers, a letter written by the hand that had directed the envelope. Both read together the words it contained :—

“ Madame,—I have the honour to inform you that I have just seen M. Meniet ; and to assure you that, according to the testimony of the physician, he is out of danger for the present ; also that he wants for nothing, and will be afforded every indulgence which may promote his recovery. The excellent Sister of Charity, whose letter I enclose, adds her testimony to mine. It is possible she may also impart to you M. Meniet's earnest and frequently expressed desire to embrace you once again. How this may determine you to act, I am, of course, unable to judge. But as I have good right to credit a member of your family with the heart to do and dare greatly, I shall not be much surprised to hear of you at Toulon ; and I can promise you permission to visit your husband. As the journey must be a costly one, I entreat your acceptance of the enclosed ; and if circumstances, of which I am unaware, should render the undertaking impossible, I beg of you to present it, in my name, to my little friend Claude. (Signed) CHANTAL.”

There was a steady light in the blue eyes of Annette, and a flush on her cheek ; but she did not speak a word. She stooped for the other letters, which had fallen here and there, took all in her hand together, and rose. Madeleine asked where she was going.

“ To tell his mother,” she answered, in a low quiet voice that told little of the tumult in her heart. At the door of Madame Larachette's room she paused, and said, “ Wait here, my child, and pray. I will come again. I have much to say to thee.”

“ I will, mother. I will ask God to guide you,” Madeleine answered.

"He *has* guided. Ask him to prosper me," Annette said, as she left the room.

She was some time absent. Claude at first was greatly excited, and asked a hundred questions about his father and M. de Chantal; but Madeleine at length induced him to go to bed, and sat down beside him. It was not long until slumber sealed the boy's young eyes, much to the relief of his sister, who needed time to think of what had happened and might happen.

At last Annette came again. She closed the door cautiously behind her; and it was in answer to a questioning look of hers that Madeleine said, "Claude is asleep, mother." Not even then content, she brought the lamp and held it near the face of the slumbering boy—a fair picture, with his glossy tumbled hair, and dark silken eyelashes, shading rosy cheeks. Then she sat down near Madeleine, took her hand in hers, and said, "What dost thou think I ought to do?"

"To go to my father," was the unhesitating answer.

"I thank God, who has shown that to thee and me," said Annette.

"But, mother, the journey, with all its toils and dangers—it will kill you!—you, so weak already."

"It will not kill me, dear child. Rather will it cure me. And I know that, were it ten times harder, strength would be given. Have no fears for me, Madeleine."

"Dear mother, might we not go all together?"

"Ah, my child, answer that question for thyself. Thy grandmother's journeying days are over; and Claude would be exposed to a thousand dangers, both on the journey and in Toulon; even were there none to menace thee."

But what dangers would not Madeleine brave, only to see her father's face again? Were it not that perfect love casts out envy as well as fear, she could have envied her mother with all her heart.

"Mother, mother," she said, almost with a cry of pain, "I would not fear anything, if only I might see my father."

"My child, I could not see him, did I not leave thee here. Thine is the harder part, Madeleine. Thou wilt have to be thy grandmother's daughter, and Claude's little mother."

Madeleine knew that neither of these offices would be a sinecure. "I think I could, mother," she mused, gravely weighing her responsibilities and her powers, "if only René had not gone away. That is such a pity. For my grandmother loves him, and Claude always obeys him. Oh, if René were but with us, all would be well!"

Very glad was Annette, for reasons of which Madeleine had no conception, that René was not with them. She loved him as a son; and yet, or rather *because* she did so, she looked upon the three years he must spend at Lausanne as providentially interposed between the happy, innocent present, and the perilous uncertain future—between the boy's life and the man's.

But no trace of these thoughts could Madeleine's candid, childlike eyes read in her mother's face. Apparently without connection with the words of her child, though really suggested by them, was Annette's next remark: "You must do the best you can for the present, dear Madeleine. By-and-by some change will be advisable—nay, necessary; then God will show us the way. Were it not for the grandmother, I might, after all, try to find a home for you at Toulon."

"At Toulon!" Madeleine's eyes brightened, and her heart thrilled, as she heard it. To these two dwellers amidst the everlasting hills, resplendent "for glory and for beauty" in their robes of snow, the narrow streets of the dark, unlovely town seemed a promised land, a very garden of Eden—for the husband and the father was there. To her who had to go thither the desire of her heart was granted; from her who had to stay it was withheld, and instead there was given her the cross to take up daily. Which had really the better portion, who could say?

Madeleine was not, at thirteen, a mere child, like the

maidens that grow up in our happy sheltered homes, with only the discipline of childish tasks and pleasures. Her childhood had come to an end that December night when Majal bade her comfort her mother. It was in fulfilment of this mission, and with all a woman's self-forgetting love, that she found strength to say now, though her own heart was aching, "Mother, I am so glad you are going to our father."

And yet she had more cause for gladness than she knew. We often hear of "the danger of exaggerating the importance of moments in life;" yet is it true that in many lives there are moments of surpassing significance, crises, beginnings, endings. But such moments are not isolated, independent of antecedents and consequences, like pebbles flung by an idle hand. They hold to the past and the future such relation as the sudden stroke of a timepiece holds to the silent, unceasing evolutions of its hidden mechanism.

Chantal's letter made a decisive moment in the life of Annette Meniet. Responsive to its summons, soul touched nerve, and nerve touched flesh and blood within her, bidding them be strong, for there was work to do. Even in the sorest hour of her anguish and desolation she had not wished to die, for she knew that her captive husband and her helpless children had yet need of her. Still the current that seemed to be sweeping her onwards towards "the great and wide sea" might have proved too strong for her weak arm to stem—even though she "toiled in rowing"—had not a sudden and powerful impulse changed the course of her barque, and steered it once more towards the busy, peopled shore.

Meanwhile, far away, something had taken place of which her heart in its preoccupation took no heed, though it was indirectly intimated in the letters she had just received. In one sense, her dream had found its fulfilment, even on earth. Henceforth "no galleys with oars" should ever again cleave the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean, or carry its freight of human agony and degradation into more distant seas. Modern science and modern humanity had at last

proved too strong for the traditions of mediæval times ; and the heavyplash of the long oar, the shriek that followed the comité's lash, and the wild yell of the chamade, no more found a place amidst the " sounds of lamentation, woe, and wrong " that go up continually from earth to heaven. In the year 1748 the galleys of France were suppressed.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE FIRST SERMON.

“The voices of the dead  
Sound like a distant torrent's fall.”

**R**ENÉ PLANS fulfilled with honour and profit his career as a student in the Seminary of Lausanne, instituted for the express purpose of training ministers for the Desert Church of France. The instructions of the venerable Antoine Court, and of the professors found willing to aid him in his labour of faith and love, supplemented the teaching he had received, in the first instance, from the lips of his father, then from those of Annette Meniet. After an absence of three years, he set out upon the perilous journey back to his native land, his mind well stored with the learning needful to interpret and illustrate Holy Scripture, and his heart burning with zeal to devote soul and body to the service of “the Church under the cross.”

He arrived in safety, and received the imposition of hands, which constituted his regular ordination, under the vault of heaven, in a rocky valley of the Vivarais. A young brother of the martyred minister, Louis Rang, was ordained with him; and the officiating pastor, Pierre Peyrot, addressed them both, in words of simple but fervid eloquence, from the appropriate text, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.” His sermon may still be read by the curious; but such relics of the past are dried flowers, from which the fragrance has died away with the

sun and the wind of the far-away summers that matured them. We should need, not only the influences of time and place—the wild and rocky landscape, the eager listening thousands—but the edicts of Louis XIV. and Louis XV. suspended over us, to understand the emotions that thrilled those two young hearts at the preacher's concluding appeal : “It is only too certain that we are sheep in the midst of wolves. What does this demand ? You feel it ! A sacred deposit is confided to you ; you ought to keep it. A crown is placed on your head ; suffer no man to take it from you.”

If further commentary were needed on the words of the text, it was supplied by the conversation the young “proposants” heard afterwards, as with Pierre Peyrot, and two other pastors who had taken part in the ceremony, they partook of their simple meal under the shelter of a rock.

The persecution continued to rage with unabated fury ; and many stories were told of fines, confiscations, imprisonments, and worse than all, of the forcible and often wholesale separation of Protestant children from their parents. In some parts of the country there had been actual dragonnades.

Peyrot, with his friend and colleague, the heroic Michel Viala, mourned over these dismal scenes, and seemed almost disposed to ask, with the Psalmist, “Hath God forgotten to be gracious ? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies for ever ?”

But the other pastor, a stranger in the district, inclined to more hopeful views. He was a man of distinguished appearance, with a good figure and a pleasant face, shaded by chestnut locks, over which he wore a small brown bonnet, matching his brown overcoat. The uninitiated called him the Chevalier de Briga, and in his bearing and character there was an “élan,” a noble frankness and daring, that suited the aristocratic name it pleased him to assume. But the churches of the Desert knew him as Étienne Diffère, the indefatigable evangelist of Béarn, the enthusiastic friend of Paul Rabaut, the “coal of fire,” as with

much truth he styled himself, candidly admitting and lamenting his deficiency in the cooler virtues of prudence and discretion.

"My dear friends, take courage," he said, stretching out the "beautiful hand" specially noticed in the "signalment" of the police. "It is true our brethren suffer; but when was that not true? Instead of weeping and lamenting we ought to thank God for his grace given unto them so abundantly. Our *forçats* are kept in faith and patience, and even their outward condition has undergone a change for the better. You know, brethren, how they were made to suffer in former days. I need not recall those tales of horror, so fresh in your memories. Then the red jacket, the badge of the Huguenot *forçat*, drew upon its wearer every imaginable torture and insult. Now it is absolutely becoming a protection. '*Forçats pour la foi*' are really treated with more kindness and consideration than thieves and murderers. Besides, the suppression of the galleys has been a manifest boon to them. Never again can forced labour be so cruel, or prisons so hateful, as were those 'floating hells.'"

"Have you seen M. Lafond, lately?—the pastor who ministers to our *forçats*," Peyrot asked.

"I have. I was entreated not to go to Toulon, the risk was so great; but—" he paused, and shrugged his shoulders expressively, while a smile passed round the group.

"M. Lafond's work, if possible, deepens in interest," he continued. "He has obtained, of late, most efficient aid in solacing his suffering flock. The wife of one of our confessors obtained leave to visit her husband during a severe illness; and she has contrived to arrange a plan of communication with him, and through him, with others. She resides with one of the prison officials, who has the contract for supplying the convicts with food, and she makes herself so useful to the women of the family, who manage the business, that the kind offices she performs for the

prisoners are permitted or overlooked. It is said, moreover, that she has a powerful protector in an officer of high rank, a connection of M. l'Intendant. She is, indeed, a crown to her husband, and many beside her children will rise up and call her blessed ; but for the present, her name and her work should remain hidden, not from the world alone, but even from the Church. The least indiscretion would peril everything."

Viala and Peyrot were both aware that their colleague's own share of discretion was not large ; nor were they anxious to press him to further disclosures in the presence of the young proposants. But one of these thought he knew what Diffère had not told. René remembered that Madame Meniet, in the hours when her heart was open, had sometimes betrayed her longing to minister to her Lord in his suffering members. So great was his anxiety to hear more, that when the repast was over he ventured to draw M. Diffère aside, and after due apologies for an inquiry which his age and position scarcely gave him a right to make, he said, "I do not ask you, Monsieur le Pasteur, to name the lady of whom you spoke just now, only to tell me whether she is not the near relative of an honoured martyr, whose praise is in all the churches."

"She is," said the frank Diffère. "His sister ; and worthy of him."

"One word more, M. le Pasteur. Is her family—are her children—with her at Toulon ?"

"Certainly not. It would never have answered. They are safe in the Cévenol mountains, with their friends."

René thanked him, and turned away ; but the warm-hearted pastor of Béarn would not let the young proposant depart without a word of counsel and blessing. He took a paper from his wallet, and showed it to René.

"Do you know what that represents, my young friend ?" he asked.

It was a carefully-executed drawing of a seal or medallion, on which was engraved a frail barque tossed upon a stormy

sea—the sails torn, the masts shivered, the mariners kneeling with helpless hands clasped in prayer, while beneath was inscribed the legend, “Lord, save, or we perish!”

“You have there,” said Diffère, without waiting for an answer, “the arms and cognizance of the Desert Church, as engraved upon the seal affixed to our Synodal Acts.”

René gave him back the paper with a smile. “I thank God, who has given me the honour to be enrolled this day among those kneeling mariners,” he said.

“You do well,” Diffère answered, with a warm grasp of the young man’s hand. “For they are of those who shall stand hereafter on the sea of glass, having the harps of God;—if they be found faithful. But remember, my young brother, thou and I have no strength for faithfulness, save that we gain by cleaving to our faithful God and Saviour.”

Had René sought his own pleasure, he would have taken staff in hand that day, and made his way over hill and valley to the mountain cottage of Trou. But he was ordained a pastor of the Desert Church, that he might follow in the steps of One who “pleased not Himself.” Therefore months passed away before he found himself free to revisit the place of his birth.

At first he accompanied M. Peyrot, then he made a missionary tour by himself over the Coiron, and through the wild, inaccessible region where “Les Boutières” raise their volcano-shattered heads. He travelled always on foot, often through rain, sleet, and snow, by the lonely and perilous pathways which the simple mountaineers still point out as having been made beautiful, in the days of persecution, by the feet of those who brought glad tidings and published peace. Sometimes he slept in the huts of the faithful, oftener in a cavern or beneath a rock, with dried leaves for his bed and a stone for his pillow. He shrank, not without reason, from exposing his friends to danger; moreover, he was young and strong, and at this stage of his experience, tempted rather to court hardship and peril than to avoid them.

So keen was the persecution at that time, that he was unable to convene any public assembly. For the six or eight months that succeeded his ordination his work consisted in visiting from house to house, and holding, under great precautions, small semi-private meetings for prayer and exhortation. But when Spring smiled once more upon the fertile valley of the Eyrieu, it fell to René's lot, at last, to address a great assembly, gathered on the slope of one of its romantic vine-clad hills.

The scene was too solemn, the associations it awakened too thrilling, for those minor embarrassments which so often distract the thoughts of him who raises his voice for the first time in the presence of his brethren and fathers.

He read aloud from the book that had been Jean Desjours's dying gift the words of his text : " Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Throughout the long hours of the previous night had he wrestled with his God, pleading for this boon—that the faces which crowded round him, summoned by the strong spell of those words, might not obscure the one Face he desired to see himself, and to manifest to others. His prayer was heard. If he spoke in thrilling words of a "good man" known to all, for whom some had nobly shown they could dare to die, but who had chosen instead to die for them, it was to commend the love of Him who gave His life, not for friends, but for enemies, that He might make them brethren, sons of God, and heirs of eternal life.

All were moved by the eloquence of the young pastor, who himself had not a thought whether he was eloquent or no. Many wept; but a group near him showed a degree of emotion that particularly attracted his attention. There were two men advanced in years, and several women, amongst them a girl, who kept her face hidden, but whose slight frame, convulsed with sobs, betrayed the feelings she sought to conceal. When the service was over, one of the men joined the throng that surrounded the pastor, and stood awaiting his turn to speak with him.

But René, recognising Étienne Lorin, came to his side at once with affectionate greetings and inquiries. Yes, his wife was well. And his daughters? Jacqueline was married, and settled in Vernoux; Marie was with them still. His brother Pierre had come to the *préche*; thank God, they were all more earnest about religion since that sad time, six years ago. Surely M. le Pasteur would do them the favour to come home with them?

René hesitated, unwilling to expose them to danger. But Étienne insisted, and he yielded. Before they joined the family he took occasion to inquire, "Did you receive my letter from Montpellier, telling of our dear friend Desjours?"

"We did, M. le Pasteur. Marie keeps it still—will keep it always, I think. Poor child! she believes him a martyr. Perhaps she is scarcely wrong."

"This I know, Père Lorin—we might all gladly be where he is now."

But Lorin turned hastily from the subject, as he saw the women come forward to greet the pastor. "Rachel, Marie," he said, "let your hearts be glad to-day; M. le Pasteur will honour our home with his presence. Brother Pierre, you must come with us, too, and we will talk of old times together."

"Then you must call the boy, to whom you showed so much kindness, by the name he bore in the old times," said René, shaking hands with the women and with Pierre Lorin.

And thus, once more, he spent a night in the hut of the forester, Étienne Lorin. The communion they held together, if a little tinged with sadness, was hopeful and refreshing to all the party. They "strengthened each other's hands in God."

But just as they were about to separate for the night, René heard tidings, from the lips of Pierre Lorin, which could not but cause him deep sorrow. His late wandering life had prevented his learning, until now, the arrest of two pastors—François Bénezet, a young proposant, the pupil

and friend of Rabaut, and Molines, accounted one of the most eloquent preachers of the Desert, and popularly called Fléchier, from a supposed likeness to the celebrated bishop and orator of that name.

"You have more to tell?" René said, after a mournful pause. "Doubtless both have joined their brethren—with the souls under the altar?"

"M. Bénezet is at rest; he died bravely. But Molines—oh, M. le Pasteur, there are worse things than death!"

"What, my friend? Do you mean that he—he—has denied his Lord? I cannot believe it!" cried René, with a start and a look of horror.

"Too true, monsieur. The gibbet is a grim reality. When Molines stood face to face with that, his courage failed."

René covered his face and groaned aloud. Shame and anguish thrilled every nerve. It was the fall of a standard-bearer, and he seemed to see the honoured standard trailed in blood and mire. Who, after this, could dare to say again, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee?"

Étienne Lorin broke the silence. "He strengthened his companion," he said, "and then, afterwards, failed himself. Poor M. Bénezet, his was a bitter cup! He was but six-and-twenty, and he leaves a young wife and orphan babe to mourn for him."

"God pity the widow! hers is the sorest martyrdom," said Madame Lorin. "But, my husband, our dear René (since he will be called so), looks tired to death; and no marvel. Ask him to lead our evening prayer, and let us go to rest."

Yet was it long before René slept. He rose from the comfortable bed prepared for him, and sat beside the hearth, where he and Desjours had talked together of Majal's heroic life. There was a great conflict in the young man's soul that night. Cased in armour of proof though he seemed to be against the perils of the lot he had chosen, a keen shaft had found a joint in the harness, and pierced

him to the heart. There was another side to martyrdom—a shadow to the glory. It was well with Majal ; it was well, too, with Bénezet—he walked with Christ in white garments—but how was it, the while, with Bénezet's heart-broken widow? That pale young face haunted René, and “held his eyes from sleep.” He had never seen it ; yet, to his fancy, it wore familiar features. Whose were those deep blue eyes, that pure and candid brow, still wearing the grace of childhood, though touched with a yet more potent charm, the dawning light of womanhood? Once more he found himself at Mazel, once more he held a small hand in his, and heard a low voice murmur, “I must comfort my mother.” Then the scene changed to the elder's cottage at Trou ; he stood beneath the old chestnut-tree, he trod the little path to the village, he climbed the mountain heights. But that form was always beside him ; of that presence he never for a moment ceased to be conscious. It was infinitely dearer to him than aught else on earth.

It had been so for six long years ; though unaccustomed to “think about thinking, and feel about feeling,” he had never torn up the roots of his soul to ascertain from what soil they drew their nourishment. But pain is a great revealer of secrets. His tears fell fast that night—less for Molines's apostasy than for the agony that could make even such baseness conceivable ; less for Bénezet's young widow than for one to whom love had no better thing to offer than the chance of such a fate.

The trust and the tenderness of love were at strife within him. If one voice cried aloud, “Spare the loved one hardship, peril, anguish ; let her be shielded from all !” the other answered promptly, “Ay, but she has a heroic heart. Hers is the right, in God's sight and man's, to choose her own lot.” René's strong heart vibrated between the two, like steel between two magnets.

But since it is the strongest love that ever trusts the most, he might have decided to “put his fortune to the touch,” had not considerations that appealed to manly

honour and generosity made themselves heard on the other side. Madeleine's father was a captive, her mother was far away. Practically she was an orphan, and unprotected ; and the roof that sheltered her, the bread she ate, were in reality—*his!* His bronzed cheek grew crimson in the darkness, as he remembered this. The cottage home, which for three years he had longed day and night to see once more, suddenly acquired a repellent power. He knew not how he should ever go thither again. He would rather go to the ends of the earth.

Accustomed to find prayer his refuge and his solace, he sought it now, and not altogether in vain. It quieted the tempest within him ; and then, at last, near the breaking of the day, his healthy physical nature claimed the refreshment of slumber, for the fatigues of the previous day had been excessive. When he awoke the sun was up, and all the world astir.

Almost the first object that greeted his eye was a letter from M. Peyrot, brought by one of the secret accredited agents of the Church. As his missionary tour in the Vivarais was now ended, it was thought that his native province, the Hautes Cévennes, had more urgent need of his services ; and he was therefore requested to repair thither, and put himself at the disposal of his old friend and pastor, M. Roux.

He drew a long sigh of surprise and perplexity. “So, after all, it must be,” he mused. “Trou lies in my path ; cannot be avoided, for many reasons. God guide me !—I know not what to do. This is a great misfortune.”

Perhaps he thought so ; but, if he did, he bore it with remarkable fortitude. From his beaming eye, his glowing countenance, and his elastic step, the Lorins inferred that he had heard good tidings, and began to congratulate him. He did not, or could not, undeceive them ; but he asked their prayers (they would have been his without the asking), and, after an affectionate parting, set out on his journey.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### HOME.

“ Standing, with uncertain feet,  
Where the brook and river meet,  
Womanhood and childhood fleet.”

SOME lives resemble a still, grey, cloudy day. There is “no wind, no rain, no thunder ;” nothing strong, intense, passionate. Little things occupy and interest ; little cares and duties fill up the long hours. Great sorrows sometimes threaten ; but they come not. Great joys, that would take the gloomy landscape unawares and flood it with sunshine, are never even dreamed of or hoped for.

Thus grey and joyless was Madeleine’s young life in her mother’s absence. She moved about the house, a grave, patient, industrious little maiden, tending and soothing her grandmother, performing all motherly offices for her young brother, and wonderfully successful in her endeavour to rule and guide the wayward but affectionate boy. It was more difficult, perhaps, to do her duty to Madame Larachette than to Claude. The strong are often exhorted to have compassion on the weak ; it were well sometimes to remind the weak to have mercy on the strong in heart, who suffer but make no sign.

Day was wearing towards evening. Though it was spring-time, the mountain air was chill, and the snow still lay, half-melted, round the cottage.

“Put on more wood, Madeleine,” said Madame Lara-

chette from her chair, placed carefully in the warmest corner.

Madeleine rose, went out to the wood-shed, and returned with one small log.

"You have not overburdened yourself," remarked the old woman.

"Dear grandmother, our store is low. We cannot always be troubling Jacques Brissac, who is so kind to us."

"It comes back on me like a dream, that I heard of some one else who offered to cut wood for thee."

Madeleine blushed.

"Yes, grandmother," she said, in a low voice; "but it was one from whom we could neither ask nor accept anything—the curé's brother."

She sat down and resumed her work—a child's garment which she was repairing and altering. For some time both were silent; then Madame Larachette asked, suddenly, "What art thou doing with that little coat? Whose is it?"

"An old one of little Paul Brissac's, that Jeannette has given me, grandmother. I am trying to make it wearable, for to-day I saw François Mortier's orphan boy shivering with cold. Thou knowest it is not much that we can do for our Lord or His poor."

Some one knocked just then at the closed door.

"Come in," said Madeleine, expecting to see Jacques Brissac and her brother Claude.

A strong hand swung back the door, and the breath of spring filled the cottage as René entered, looked at Madeleine, and kissed the withered hand of Madame Larachette.

"René!"

"Madeleine!"

Their hands touched each the other's. Surprise and frank undisguised delight brought the roses to Madeleine's cheek, and the light to her eye. It was the brave, strong René, who, after the first rapturous moment, trembled with a strange agitation. This was not the child Madeleine, whose tears he had dried in other days. A fair and noble

girl, careworn indeed, but crowned with all the grace and beauty of womanhood, stood before him.

As one in a dream he answered Madame Larachette's confused inquiries, seeing no one all the time but Madeleine. He told them of his sojourn in Lausanne, his return last autumn, his ordination ; he repeated the welcome tidings of Madame Meniet he had heard from Diffère ; he spoke of his ministry in the Vivarais, and of his present destination. Then he asked for Claude.

"He is in the village, spending the day with the Brissacs," Madeleine said. "Probably he will stay with them for the night."

This led to inquiries for Jacques and Jeannette. The answers were cheering. Some homes there are from which "misfortune softly steps aside." The aged elder, Père Brissac, was still spared to his family and the Church, and in excellent health. Jeannette was well, and much engrossed by the care and management of two handsome, sturdy boys, Paul and René. M. le Pasteur Roux had baptized them both ; he too was safe and in good health, but his visits were necessarily brief and rare.

"When it grows dark," René said, "I will steal down to the village, see the Brissacs, and spend the night with them."

"What, René !" exclaimed Madame Larachette, with some indignation. "Do you mean to tell us that, after your four years' absence, you will spend your first night beneath any roof-tree but your own ? I could not have dreamed of such a thing."

"But consider, dear Madame, I dare not show myself in daylight. Yet I long to see my only and twin-sister," said René, not without embarrassment ; for there was another reason, to which he cared not to allude : the strict regulations imposed by the synods on the pastors forbade his remaining beneath that roof.

"Well, young folk will be headstrong. Madeleine, of what are you dreaming ? You might, at least, set food

before René, if he has not sworn not to eat, as well as not to sleep, in his own house."

"That I have not," said René. He relapsed into silence, his eyes following Madeleine as she prepared the table, placing upon it, in honour of the traveller, the best provisions the house contained, which were mostly gifts from their kind neighbours.

After a while, Madame Larachette retired to rest, and Madeleine went with her to the inner room. René did not think it yet quite dark enough for his walk to the village. He stood at the little window, looking out upon the familiar scene, over which the shades of evening were falling fast; but he soon ceased to look—even to see. A profound reverie stole over him.

Yet he heard the approach of a light, noiseless footstep. He thought he would have heard it "fathom deep in his grave;" for poetry seems the simplest prose to a man who feels as he felt then. He turned to Madeleine with kindling eyes. "Dear Madeleine," he said, "there comes to me sometimes a hope—a dream. I know not how to tell it."

Madeleine smiled. "Tell it, René," she answered; "then I shall know if it be the same as mine."

René's voice sank to a whisper. "M. Meniet is respected by every one," he said. "Already he has suffered much, and for an offence which all account a noble one. He has a powerful friend in M. de Chantal. And—of late—'forçats pour la foi'—have been occasionally—pardoned."

"Do not make me think of it!" cried Madeleine, with a piteous tone of entreaty in her voice. "Ah! my friend, if there were hope——"

"There may be," René said, gently. "But you are right, Madeleine. We must not let our hearts dwell on it now. Only if—only when" (René grew confused and agitated, seemed almost to lose his self-possession)—"when your parents are restored to you, Madeleine, think of me. I, too, have a hope—a dream—which I will tell you in that day, should that day ever come."

Madeleine looked up, with her candid, childlike eyes, anxious but unembarrassed. She saw his hesitation, but dreamed not of the cause. The faith so dear to both of them, and its interests, were uppermost in the mind of the Cévenol maiden. Did René want the cottage, which was now their home, to turn it into a school for the secret instruction of the Protestant children of the neighbourhood? M. Roux had hinted, during his last visit, that there was no place so eligible in all the district. She said, bravely, "Nay, René, tell me now; and, if it be possible, I will help you."

Then, for the first time, she noticed the strange agitation of his look and manner, and with surprise and alarm. He saw it. His voice grew low, almost monotonous, in the effort to be calm.

"You know not what you say, Madeleine. If you did, those were blessed words for me; but give me a token that you mean them."

Madeleine changed colour and trembled a little. "When did we need tokens to show we meant truly by each other?" she said. "We always spoke from the heart, and we always trusted one another."

"Still, give me a token now, Madeleine. Any trifle will do, that your hand has touched. That ribbon——"

"That you brought me, long ago, from the fair at Alais? No, René; if you must have a token, at least take something reasonable. There is a little Psalm-book M. Roux gave me——" She paused—half laughing, half blushing—with a sudden strange confusion. This was not the old René who had bought the ribbon for her—her boyish playfellow, protector, friend. This was a grown man—M. le Pasteur Plans.

René did not take the Psalm-book, though she fetched it, and offered it to him gravely. He did not move hand or foot. All his soul was in his dark, eager eyes, that burned with a steady, intense fire. "The full tide its bounds had riven"—he must speak now. "Dare I indeed say all, Madeleine?" he asked.

Madeleine's lips parted ; but no sound was heard. She began to apprehend now that the crisis of her life was upon her, and to shrink from it, in natural fearfulness.

René spoke again. His voice seemed to come from a great distance, and had in it a kind of tender thrill, as of strong, suppressed emotion. "Dare I ask you to help and comfort me, as in the old days, Madeleine ?"

"It was always you who helped and comforted us all," Madeleine faltered.

"Then, Madeleine, comfort me now, and bless me for all coming time. Say but one word—'Je t'aime !'"

René bent low to hear the answer ;—and then he bent lower still.—The room was in deep shadow ; the fire was dying ; but the evening star looked in at the lattice with pure, soft radiance.

"Now, God forgive me if I have done ill, and thought of myself first !" he said, in tones tremulous with deepest feeling. "God forgive me, and shelter thee ! Thou knowest that I am a man proscribed, with a price on my head. That in this world I have no portion or inheritance—no, not so much as to set my foot upon. If such a lot seem not too perilous, too sad—"

"Too sad, René ?" Madeleine looked up once more, and spoke bravely, even with a kind of surprise. "How could it seem sad to Majal's sister's child ? René, I have seen the glory so near, that if God called, I think I could bear—" But here her voice failed, and the words died away in a passion of tears.

Not for the first time did René dry those tears. Nor was the man less successful than the boy had been.

Time, meanwhile, slipped unnoticed by. Madame Larachette, asleep, breathed softly in the adjoining room, dreaming her son was a child at her knee again, learning his simple prayer, "Our Father, which art in heaven." The stars looked in, mute witnesses, "since the making of the world," of ten thousand scenes like this. But the familiar, frugal furniture of the humble room seemed to take a

strange and ghost-like aspect, as though changed itself by the sudden change in the human life—which, through long use and habit, it almost appeared to share in—from patience, resignation, and submission, to joy and gladness.

René and Madeleine were both thinking of the prisoner far away, and of her who was ministering to him. “Oh ! my mother !—my father !” was Madeleine’s cry.

“ Will thy mother blame me, Madeleine ? ” asked René, with a pang of doubt.

“ No,” said Madeleine’s low voice. “ Nor my father.”

“ I will write,” said René, “ as soon as I dare. I will lay myself at their feet, and submit to their guidance in all things. Hark ! is that a bell ? ”

“ It is the new clock which the curé has bought, and set up over the church door.”

“ It is late—far later than I thought,” said René. “ I must hasten to the village, or the Brissacs will be all asleep, and there might be danger in arousing them.”

“ Will you come to-morrow ? ”

“ Not to-morrow ; I must go forward to Genouilhac. But remember, Madeleine, nothing can part us really—nothing ever again.”

“ God go with thee, René ! ”

“ And stay with thee, Madeleine—life of my life ! ”

Hand rested in hand but for a moment, yet that touch of each would linger on the other as long as life should last.

Another moment, and René was gone. Madeleine stood at the door in the star-light, watching—not him, for his lithe, active figure had quickly disappeared—but the path his feet had trodden. The slow, quiet smile, “ that cometh unawares,” lingered on her lip ; but the wistful look of pain and patience had passed from her thoughtful eye ; and the old chestnut-tree, budding freshly with young life in its more than hundredth spring-tide, rustled and murmured in the breeze over the fair head of a happy girl, whose life was budding too.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### GOD WILL REPAY.

“To-day the dead are living,  
The lost are found to-day.”

TWO years of hope and fear have passed away since Madeleine stood beneath the chestnut-tree on that fair spring night. It is evening; in the mountain cottage the fire burns brightly; there is no question now of economising the logs heaped upon it, nor are they unnecessary for the preparation of a meal that might almost be called luxurious. Chestnuts and milk, “soupe grasse,” and the small, delicious “gigot” of mountain mutton, are simmering satisfactorily over the fire; while the table, neatly spread with snow-white damask (a relic of more prosperous days), and decorated with flowers, is already laden with ham, sausages, fruit, and pastry. Six places are laid there.

All that day Madeleine’s busy feet never paused, her active hands knew no rest. Perhaps it was well that she had little time for thought. Joy, the elixir of life, may become its poison if the cup be drained too eagerly, and in too deep a draught. And the joy of the children whose father was given back to them, of the mother who hoped once more to embrace her son, was “as the joy of harvest.”

Claude had gone some distance to meet the travellers; and it cost Madeleine much to remain quietly in the cottage with her grandmother, whose excitement she vainly endeav-

oured to calm, whilst herself running a hundred times to the turn in the path whence the village could be seen, and trying to look, through the happy tears that blinded her eyes, for the first signs of their approach. At last, just when she had decided authoritatively that they could not come for an hour, and succeeded in interesting her grandmother in some difficult question about the soup, she exclaimed suddenly, with changing colour, "Hush! I hear footsteps."

No ear, not quickened by love, could have heard them at such a distance. But Madeleine's was not deceived: once more she darted from the cottage.

It seemed hours, though it was but moments ere she returned. Not alone. Annette came first, with Claude, now a handsome lad of fourteen, nearly as tall as herself; and then, leaning on his daughter's arm, an old man, worn, feeble, bent, and grey.

Madame Larachette rose from her chair. But her aged limbs trembled—would have failed her, had she not been caught and held in an embrace still strong with the strength of manly filial love. "Mother!—dear mother!" said the liberated galley-slave. "Thank God, who has spared us both for this day!"

After that, not much was spoken. All tacitly recognised that feeling must be repressed, else its strong tide would rise and overwhelm them. There was danger of this. Already Madame Larachette was weeping tears of thankful joy; but Annette's quiet tact restored calmness. Not to unseal fountains of emotion too perilously full by dwelling on the past, she talked of the future. René had sent a message to say he was unable to meet them at Privas, as he had intended; but he hoped to join them "at home," and, if possible, on the night of their arrival. Then, as Madeleine, who had just been bringing her father a cup of wine, stood beside her for a moment, she took her hand in hers, and added, gently, "We know all, my child. Our René's letter reached us ere we left Toulon;

but its import was not new. He has long been dear to both of us, as a son."

With burning cheeks and a happy heart Madeleine turned to the duties of the ménage ; and Annette, laying aside her hood and cloak, quietly began to assist her. Not in vain, however, had René strained every nerve, that he might rejoin his friends on this auspicious night, and see and share their joy, as he had seen and shared their sorrow. Ere the modest festival was served, all the expected guests had arrived. René brought with him, as he always did, a fresh tide of life and hope. Embraces and congratulations were exchanged ; then, in a voice trembling with emotion, the young pastor blessed the board, where those he loved best on earth sat down, for the first time, a reunited family, beneath his father's roof.

The waters were deep, and there was little froth or sparkle on the surface. Madeleine's hand sought her father's : nor could her eyes find rest anywhere save in gazing on his face—that dear, changed, aged face, of which, for eight long years, she had dreamed night and day. Madame Larachette, also, was absorbed in her son. René enjoyed Madeleine's joy with frank self-forgetfulness, in which the exacting jealousy that so often troubles the fountains of deep love found no place ; whilst Annette, perhaps the most loving and the most beloved of all, renewed her youth in the young life of her "children," and the restoration of her husband from a living death.

Their generous friend and protector, M. de Chantal, was warmly praised that night.

"But for him," said Annette, looking fondly at her husband, "I could never have rejoined thee, mon ami."

"But for him," Jean Meniet answered, "I should not have lived to ask for thee."

"And but for him," René added, "our father would never have been set free, and restored to us all."

This was only the truth. Chantal's influence, unremittingly exercised in high quarters, and sustained by "judi-

cious bribery" (the young nobleman's worldly affairs were prospering now), had at last prevailed to open the doors of Jean Meniet's prison.

"Ah," sighed Madeleine, "would that he shared our faith—he who is so good and noble."

"At least he reverences it," René answered. "*But*"—he broke off abruptly, and left his sentence unfinished, unwilling to darken, even by the lightest shadow, the figure of their loved benefactor. He might have added that he feared Chantal's gentle, generous nature lacked decision. Though moved and impressed by what he had witnessed, he was not yet convinced—even of the great facts upon which all forms of Christianity rest. The scepticism of the age had entered into his soul like iron; only it was rather like water, softening, relaxing, dissolving everything within him, enfeebling every resolve, and loosening every principle. The paths of practical benevolence were amongst the few that he could tread with an undivided heart, and he found in them his chief solace and enjoyment. The Meniets were far from being his only protégés, especially amongst the persecuted Protestants. Eventually (but not until some years afterwards) he sought relief from doubts and anxious questionings in action and adventure, and found a soldier's death in a distant land.

But to return to the supper-table of the Meniets. The restored captive had soon finished his repast, and sat as one in a dream, his head resting on his hand. Madeleine's loving eyes, full of a strange, new reverence, rested on him intently, seeming almost to read his thoughts. And at length he gave them utterance. "I was dreaming of the past," he said. "Eight long years and more—long years, my children, not hard or bitter, only long—have rolled back, and I think we are sitting at supper in the old home at Mazel, the night we first saw your face, René Plans. I see it now—a fair boyish face, rather sad when at rest, but beaming with life and intelligence as we talked together. Claude was on your knee, and Madeleine sat

beside you—the child Madeleine. Ah ! where is my little maid, with the pure, tender look, and the deep violet eyes ? ”

“ Father,” said Madeleine, in a trembling voice, “ am I so changed ? ”

“ Changed, my child ? Ay ; that thou art. We are all changed. The young have ripened ; the old faded. For we are old, thy mother and I : though I, the elder, have little more than half fulfilled the fourscore years allotted to man. But for eight years I was not a man, but a number, a thing—‘ Numéro deux-mille-cinq-cent-cinquante-deux.’ Those eight years may count for three times eight ; and thy mother’s, Madeleine, were full as long as mine.”

“ Father”—it was René’s deep voice that spoke now—“ Father, do you regret them ? ”

“ Regret them, René ? God forbid ! I, the king’s slave, was Christ’s freeman, and God’s servant ; and He paid my wages to the uttermost farthing. I knew but little of the riches of his grace in my easy, prosperous life at Mazel. I trusted Him as my Saviour ; but I had never found Him my portion and my joy. It was to learn that He sent me to the galleys ; and I would serve the eight years again, twice told, for the eight years’ wages.”

“ Yes,” said Annette. “ God pays his servants, not with gold and silver, but with treasures that abide for ever—‘ love, joy, peace.’ And with these, my children, He has paid your father richly.”

It was true—true, probably, of many another, as well as of Jean Meniet of Mazel. Nothing, to a superficial reader, can be more melancholy than the long, almost interminable, list of obscure “ *forçats pour la foi*,” whose names, and no more, history has just preserved. With comparatively few exceptions, they were men of the people, sons of toil—weavers, shoemakers, labourers : some, when consigned to their awful fate, were mere children of twelve, or boys of sixteen or seventeen, in whom the levity and thoughtlessness of their age mingled strangely with heroic courage and

patience.\* Not one amongst them who might not have been restored to life and freedom at the price of a denial of his faith. But they would not accept deliverance, these obscure sufferers, chosen, as it were by lot, and often to their own amazement, from the rank and file of the Church's army, to glorify God in the fires. How much, or how little, may they have known of Him for whom they witnessed?

Little perhaps at first; but God will be no man's debtor. And none but He can tell how to these, his unknown martyrs, who through long years of suffering overcame for his sake, He gave to eat of the hidden manna, and gave them the "white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it."

\* See the very interesting "Autobiography of a French Protestant condemned to the Galleys for his Religion."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### AT THE GRAVE AGAIN.

"Now let Thy good Word be fulfilled, and let Thy kingdom come."

**A**T a late hour that night René left the cottage. His friends supposed he was going, as on former occasions, to his sister's home ; but he had decided, in his own mind, that he would not expose the Brissacs, as well as himself, to the risks such an unseasonable visit might entail. There was another sleeping place not far distant, towards which his heart yearned. Nowhere could he spend the night more safely, or with a more restful heart, than beside his father's grave.

Everything favoured his plan ; the air was soft and mild, the stars shone brightly, and a young moon gave just a little light. When he reached the sacred spot, he saw with pleasure that it had been carefully and lovingly tended during his absence. Flowers were planted there, and a young evergreen oak marked and overshadowed the place.

He half sat, half reclined beside it, saying in his heart, "It is good for me to be here." Not that he was nearer the ransomed spirit, because so close to the dust that had been its mortal tenement ; but the spot, so dear to memory, the thoughts it awakened within him, the softly gleaming moonlight, the quiet hour, and the sense at once of perfect isolation and perfect security, stilled and calmed his soul, and raised it above "the changes and chances of this troublesome world."

And there, every event of the solemn night that made him an orphan came back upon his mind with vivid distinctness. As in a dream he saw all—lived through all again. But the pain was gone ; he thought not now of the anguish of those who mourned, left behind in desolation ; but of the joy of him who entered into the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

Into something of the same rest—that great deep rest which comes to those that see “the end of the Lord”—he himself seemed to be entering, even now. Eyes touched by the dust of graves see far. The past, read in the light of eternity, wonderfully illumes the future.

He thanked God for his father's life and death, and for the fragrant memory he left behind him. Then, in the still midnight, it almost seemed as though he heard a voice, long silent in the grave—“My child, it is not your father who is lying there.”

He looked up ; thin, fleecy clouds were drifting slowly over the pure deep blue of the solemn starlit sky. The calm was unbroken ; the solitude perfect.—But God was near.—God and perhaps also, those He had in his keeping—the beloved and blessed dead. Who could tell ?

After he had left his friends, he called to mind, almost with a pang of jealousy, how that not once, in the joy of their reunion, they had named him whose memory was unspeakably precious to all. For himself, what had he that he did not owe to Majal? His friendship with the Meniets, his affianced bride, his calling and consecration to the ministry—yea, his “own self besides”—all had been given him through that meeting with the Pastor of the Desert at his father's grave.

How many lives had been, like his, “delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God,” through that one young life, cut off ere it reached its prime ? Victory through defeat, success through failure, joy out of anguish, life out of death—was not this,

indeed, "the secret of the Lord," revealed first, like all other secrets, through Christ and in Him?

That which had been should be again,—for himself and for others. For himself, perchance a doom like Majal's? If so, as his day his strength should be; and God would take care of her whose life was dearer to him than his own.

Yet René was not destined to be called to such a trial. Each heroic death, like Majal's, had done its part towards making such deaths impossible thenceforward. The long roll of martyr ministers was nearly full now; only two honoured names—Étienne Lafage and François Rochette—had yet to be inscribed upon it. Rochette was the last minister, and Grenier de Lourmade (the youngest of his three companions in suffering) the last layman in France to whom Rome ever formally offered the choice between conversion and death. That was seven and twenty years before the great Revolution, like a devouring flood, swept all before it, and the world was changed.

That changed world René Plans lived to see. But if thus early, in dream or vision, he could have foreseen it, the vision must have been altogether unlike the reality. It could not have entered his imagination that he should one day stand, in thought, beside a scaffold, where as of old the drums were beating with pitiless clamour, to drown the victim's dying words—that victim, no Pastor of the Desert, but the grandson and successor of Louis XV. Truly, "God is a righteous judge, strong and patient;" and He "visits the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation."

What René might have foreseen, and with truth, for himself and those dear to him, was a tried and troublous, yet happy life. Peril, poverty, conflict, often the lack of all things, even of daily bread and nightly shelter, might be his lot, and hers who had bravely chosen to share it. But the Lord would be their inheritance, and their portion in the land of the living. Like his servants in earlier days, they would be in this world "as unknown, and yet well-known;

as dying," yet could they say, "behold ! we live ; as chastened, and not killed ; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; as poor, yet making many rich ; as having nothing, yet possessing all things." And, perhaps, ere they went to rest, if God so willed it, they might "see their children's children, and peace upon Israel."

Peace upon Israel ! Kneeling there, upon the martyr's grave, René raised his eyes to heaven, while his heart went onwards to "the good time coming"—prayed for, hoped for, believed in, through the darkest hour, by his fathers and his fathers' fathers. "I die ; but God will surely visit you,"—saint after saint had murmured with failing lips, ere he was laid in the grave often so hard to find for him in his native land. Sweet as the music of distant Christmas bells which it recalled, as the song of angels which it interpreted, came back to him Majal's message : "The Lord shall comfort Zion ; He shall comfort all her waste places ; He shall make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord ; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."

Already René seemed to see, on the far away Eastern hills, the dawn of that new day. And those everlasting hills themselves seemed to echo the glorious words of prophecy and promise : "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires ; and I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncle, and all thy borders of pleasant stones."

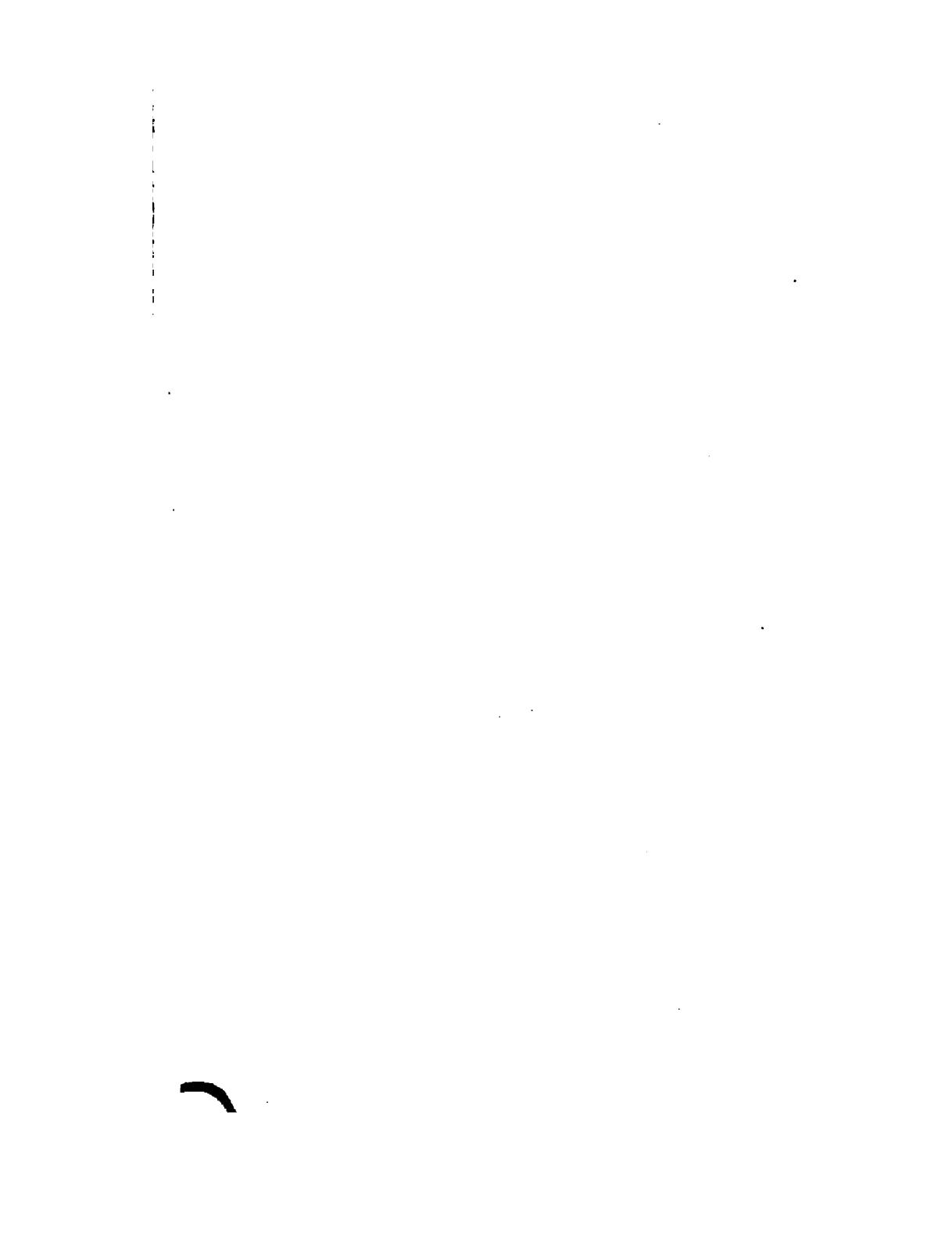
"Amen, and amen !" said the Pastor of the Desert, as the vision filled his heart with its splendour.—" May the Lord perform it in his time ! And if, in the new day of peace and prosperity, when they sit beneath their vine and their fig-tree, none making them afraid, the children of the martyrs should forget Him who was the joy and strength

of their fathers, or hold with looser hand the precious faith for which they died, yet may He remember them, and fulfil his word : ‘I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.’ Speak then to Thy Zion, O Eternal !” he prayed ; “ speak low and soft with Thy prevailing voice. Say unto her, ‘I remember thee—the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the “Desert,” in a land that was not sown.’ And let her last love and her last works be even more than the first, for the sake, not of her martyrs, but of her martyrs’ Lord and King.”

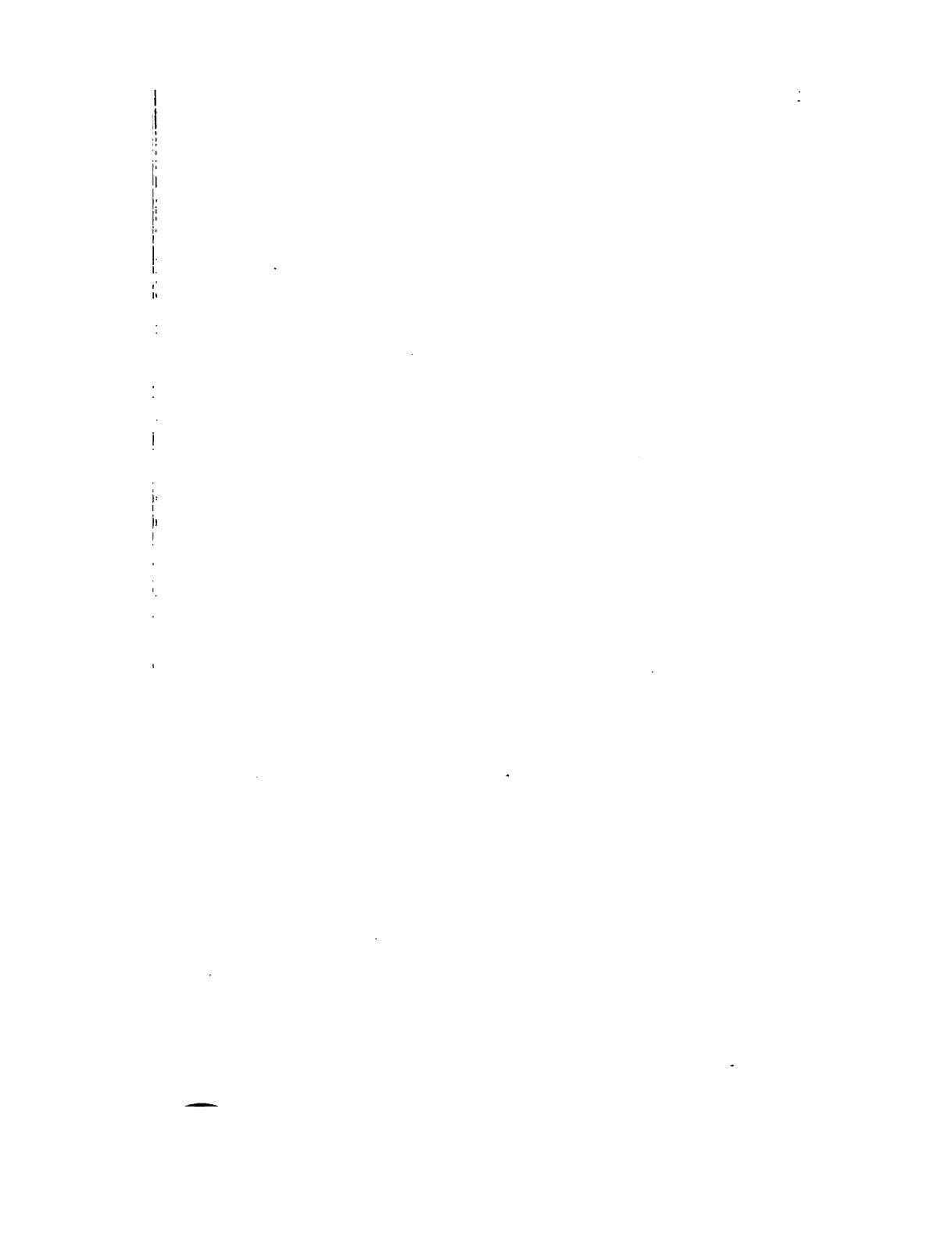
The sun arose, and touched René’s kneeling form with glory ere his prayer was ended. He had not slept ; but he had rested, and was refreshed. Thankful for the past, content in the present, and fearless for the future, he went his way ; and once more that lonely valley resounded with the song of praise and holy confidence :

“The Lord’s my shepherd, I’ll not want ;  
He makes me down to lie  
In pastures green ; He leadeth me  
The quiet waters by.”

THE END.



**IN THE CITY.**



## IN THE CITY.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### A THEME FOR A POEM.

“ Still at the bayonet’s point he stood, and strong to meet the blow,  
He shouted ‘midst his rushing blood, ‘Arm, arm, Auvergne—the foe.’ ”

OLD Paris was bright with the sunshine of a glorious June morning, and gay with banners, flowers, and tapestry. It was the day of a high festival—the Fête Dieu—and in the Paris of the Philosophers and of the Encyclopædia—men were making holiday as though they still believed the miracle without evidence which the Romish Church has made a central dogma of her creed.

Mass was over; and a gay crowd swept forth from the stately and beautiful portico of the Church of St. Sulpice, a noble prize for which Jesuits and Jansenists were even then contending fiercely. The pleasure-seekers, for such they all were, soon scattered in various directions; many took the streets leading to the river, where packet-boats and barges of various kinds awaited them, while others sought the welcome shade of the chestnut alleys in the gardens of the Luxembourg.

Amongst the latter was a youth of about twenty, gaily equipped in a maroon-coloured velvet doublet, with deep ruffles of “Point d’Argentan,” perruque in the newest fashion, and useless little hat, or “claque,” carried, not on

his head, but under his arm. In his observance of every Parisian mode there was even a shade of exaggeration, which might have suggested to a practised eye that he was not a Parisian. His features were handsome, his eyes large, dark, and full of fire. The indications of an ardent, sensitive, impressible nature were easily read; but underlying these were others, less obvious. Instead of the restless, wakeful air engendered by the stir and strain of city life, there was a quiet and repose, a look of silent slumbering strength. Such tokens of race, heirlooms from an ancestry more or less remote, are sometimes preserved in the outward aspect, long after the qualities of which they were the signs have passed away.

Presently he was joined by a friend, who had not come forth from the gates of St. Sulpice or of any other church. As they walked on together they formed a striking contrast in everything, except their frank, careless, good-humoured satisfaction with themselves, with each other, and with all that surrounded them. The new-comer—older than his companion, and more soberly, though quite as fashionably dressed—was of middle height, slender, active, alert, and full of observation. Every moment he bowed to some acquaintance, or pointed out a remarkable person or a droll incident to his friend, who saw far less;—but anything really beautiful, such as a fair child's face in the crowd, or a gleam of sunlight on the roses and lilies in the balconies, seldom failed to attract his attention.

"Well, my dear Gerard," said the elder, as they entered the broad and shady alleys of the Luxembourg, "and what of the Mass?"

"Ah! Prosper, it was divine!" Gerard answered with enthusiasm. Not the dogma, but the music was under consideration; for Gerard was a musician, while Prosper believed himself a poet, since some verses of his had been pronounced "full of salt and flavour" by the formidable critics of the "salons." He had come to Paris in search of patrons and a publisher, whilst it was his friend's ambi-

tion to find a dramatic author of established reputation who would allow his piece to receive its musical setting at his hands. Both were strong in heart and high in hope. Gerard intended to rival Pergolèse and Buranelli; Prosper, more audacious, dreamed of being named next after Voltaire, though certainly at a great distance. Yet each would rather have called himself, or been called by others, "philosopher," than poet or musician; for that was the age in which "every fool who spoiled paper styled himself a philosopher."

"If I were you, Gerard," Prosper suggested, "I should begin by composing a mass."

"That I shall not do, as I am Gerard," his friend answered with decision.

"Ah! you think it would tell against you in certain circles? Not at all, my friend. Men of enlightened views, men of the world, in fact, understand the difference between art and superstition; and would do justice to the motives of a young man of spirit, who has no prejudices and only seeks to distinguish himself. Has not Grétry made his *début* by a mass?"

"Yes; the boy Grétry. A fine genius! Yet he shall learn, I hope, that the noble task of naturalising the music of Italy in France needs more than one workman."

"You are fortunate," Prosper resumed, "in being able to identify your genius with the cause of a party. 'Gerard and the music of Italy!' will make a good rallying cry for the salons and the parterre. As for me, I too have found a theme which I think ought to be popular and successful. In confidence, my friend, I may tell you that I am writing an ode upon the death of D'Assas. A grand subject, and one which has the merit of being fresh in every man's mind. Listen now!" Prosper assumed the poet, a character which, with him, could be taken up and laid down at pleasure, and leaning on the marble balustrade of the terrace which overlooked the palace garden, he told a story, already of course as well known to Gerard as to

himself. "Our general, M. le Marquis de Castries, is surprised in his camp at Clostercamp. The Chevalier d'Assas is on duty, at an outpost. The enemy steal upon him noiselessly under cover of night. Their bayonets are at his heart. 'Silence! not a word, or it is thy last!' 'Auvergne! Auvergne! the foe is here!' D'Assas shouts—and dies. And our army is saved. There, M. Gerard, what think you of that for a theme?"

Gerard did not speak. Tears filled his eyes; such tears as the exquisite melody of the chanted mass had called forth an hour before.

"It will do," Prosper went on, "with a fine conclusion about universal peace, mercy, and humanity."

Gerard roused himself from a dream of the glory of self-sacrifice, to ask what in the world peace, mercy, and humanity had to do with the devotion of D'Assas.

"With D'Assas little enough—with my poem, and the gentlemen upon whom its success depends, a great deal. Humanity, Beneficence, Philanthropy—these are our three new words, M. Gerard. To sprinkle your page plentifully with these is the secret of success with the philosophers and with the vulgar. But listen! Do you hear those cries? There is something doing outside. Let us come and see; perhaps we shall find a theme for a song, or at least a hint for an epigram."

They descended the steps of the terrace, crossed the gardens, and reached the handsome street of Vaugirard; where they found a scene of tumult and confusion.

Not many years had passed since the impressible Parisians, rejoicing in their King's recovery from a dangerous fever, saluted him with tears and prayers and blessings as Louis the Well-beloved. But those years, with their black record of sin and shame, had changed that love into unutterable scorn and loathing. And now Louis the Hated, Louis the Despised, no longer dared even to enter his capital. Such had been his reception, on his last visit, that he had a new road constructed, by which he could go from Versailles to

St. Denys without passing through Paris. It was called expressively "Le Chemin de la Révolte."

Upon this festival day, however, Mesdames de France desired to perform their devotions in a church of the city. The Parisian populace had no cause to hate these devout and harmless women, who led pure and simple lives amidst the indescribable pollutions of their father's court. But they were the daughters of Louis XV., and by the necessities of God's providential order, the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children.

When Prosper and Gerard emerged from the gardens of the Luxembourg, the Rue Vaugirard was filled with a noisy, insulting mob, through which the royal carriages forced their way with difficulty. The slender guard strove in vain to keep back the crowd, who pressed even to the carriage windows, shouting every party watchword of the day and hour, mingled with rude jests and imprecations. An instant afterwards—no one knew how or why—a sword flashed in the sunshine, stones were thrown, the cries grew louder and fiercer, the curses more bitter. The mob, at first half in jest, was in dangerous earnest now; and the guard, growing exasperated, had recourse to their weapons. "Back, canaille!" cried one of the horsemen, waving his sword towards the spot where Gerard and Prosper stood, idle though interested spectators of the fray.

Gerard instantly recoiled; but Prosper held his ground until forced back by those around him. Even then he contrived to distinguish himself from the "canaille" by retiring with dignified slowness, and taking up an eligible position beside his friend on the steps of a convent gate. "If D'Assas had known when to retreat as well as you, Gerard, I should have no theme for my poem," he laughed.

"I was a pupil of the Jesuits," Gerard returned, "and they taught me to obey."

"Because you must?"

"No; because I owed it to the body of which I was a member. These sons of the old Romans knew how to

inspire the *esprit de corps*, and to teach the dignity of law.”

“What! are *you* going to defend them? At this hour of the day!” \*

“No man less inclined. But remember, the Patriarch himself was their pupil, and always speaks of them with gratitude.”

“Ah! when you talk of M. de Voltaire, it is a different matter. A genius so sublime——”

“Look, Prosper!” cried Gerard, unceremoniously cutting short his friend’s tribute of devotion to the monarch of the philosophers, “yonder is a scholar of the Jesuits, scarce likely to do them as much credit as Voltaire. That ugly, misshapen urchin—who is here, there, everywhere in the hottest *mèlée*—is Gustave Adolphe Bairdon, my landlady’s hopeful son, pupil at the college of Louis le Grand, and plague and terror of a certain luckless musician, whose very harpsichord—not to say his MSS.—is hardly safe from his mischievous fingers.”

“Gustave Adolphe Bairdon! What a name for a mean little bourgeois!”

“Like the heroic Swede in nothing, save his love of fighting. The name has been in his mother’s family since the days of the great Richelieu and the Thirty Years’ War, when the Lutheran king was the idol of Paris. Nor is the surname French. The father is a Scottish Jacobite; but one rarely sees him.”

A shrill cry of pain and terror brought their talk to a sudden close. Looking towards the spot where the crowd was thickest, they saw that some one had fallen, and was lying beneath the hoofs of the horses.

“‘Tis Gustave!” cried Gerard, and instantly he ran down the convent steps and plunged into the midst of the throng. In a few minutes he returned, his lace torn, his velvet stained with blood, and bearing in his arms an apparently lifeless form.

\* This was on the eve of the expulsion of the Jesuits from France.

"Prosper, my friend, call a fiacre!" he entreated, but the panegyrist of D'Assas was nowhere to be seen. As the French expressively say, he had "saved himself." Yet Jules Prosper was a brave man; he would have fought and died on the battle-field like a true Frenchman, though he "did not see the necessity" of involving himself in a street brawl for the rescue of a little bourgeois. It was true that M. de Sartines, the very vigilant lieutenant of police, who "knew what people had for dinner, and said to their wives and children," did not always notice or punish flagrant breaches of the peace; but even *he* would scarcely dare to pass over that day's affair; and the consequences, to one who made himself conspicuous in it, might be unpleasant. A young and rising man of letters could not be too circumspect.

Gerard carried his burden to the Place St. André, where in those days vehicles stood for hire. He entered one, and gave the address, "Numéro 18, Rue Béthizy."

By this time the injured lad had recovered consciousness. He was slightly deformed, had a clever, old-looking face, and though nearly fifteen, was no taller than a well-grown boy of twelve. He had been struck, just above the ankle, by the hoof of a horse, and Gerard had no doubt the limb was broken. He held him as tenderly, and made his position as easy as possible, but could not prevent his suffering greatly, as the carriage jolted over the ill-kept streets of old Paris; and the contempt and aversion he had hitherto felt for him changed into a kind of respect when he saw him bravely repress the cries of pain that rose to his lips, and heard him try to say he was not so much hurt, after all.

As they drew near their destination, Gerard thought with dismay, "What if, on this fête-day, all is shut up, and no one left in charge?" His fears were groundless. The shop was shut, of course; but the driver had knocked but once when the door was opened by a young girl. Gerard had seen her before; yet her picture as he saw it then,

framed in the quaint doorway, left itself for ever on his mind. The half-formed, slender figure as yet lacked symmetry, and the dainty charms of a Frenchwoman's toilet were absent from the simple dress—a plain sacque of linsey, a white camisole, and a blue ribbon which bound the abundant golden hair. But the truthful, trustful eyes were blue like the hairbell, and the fair, pure, childlike features had a grace and finish of their own,—such grace as the bloom gives the peach, if not such as the sculptor's chisel gives the statue.

Gerard desired the driver to wait for further orders, and gently carried the wounded boy into the shop. "Made-moiselle Griselle, do not be alarmed," he said. "Your brother is hurt; but I hope not seriously. Where shall I lay him?"

The colour faded from the young girl's cheek; but without speaking a word, she led the way through the shop, up the dark, narrow little staircase to the entresol, and pulled off the elaborately embroidered coverlet of the state bed.

"Gerard laid his burden down, and said, "Will Made-moiselle favour me with the address of the surgeon whose services she would desire?"

"M. Vauden, Numéro 2, Rue St. Honoré," the young girl answered promptly.

"He shall be here immediately." Gerard went; and returned in ten minutes, accompanied by the surgeon, a plain working man, in a white apron, with a case of instruments under his arm. He did his work well and quickly; whilst Griselle waited on him like a brave, self-forgetting girl, too truly tender-hearted to shrink weakly from the sight of pain. Yet they could have ill dispensed with Gerard's aid; and the surgeon, as he bowed himself out, complimented him highly on his tact and kindness.

Nor was his work over then. He watched beside the patient, while Griselle kindled a fire, and made tisane and eau sucrée; he fetched medicine, fruit, and ice; making

himself not only useful but indispensable, until evening brought the family home from their day's excursion to St. Cloud. Then, before Madame Bairdon's exclamations of surprise and horror at her son's condition were half over, Gerard had withdrawn himself to his solitary attic, and locked himself in.

## CHAPTER II.

### G E R A R D ' S   H O M E .

“ Consider it well : each tone of our scale in itself is nought ;  
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said.  
Give it to me to use ! I mix it with two in my thought,  
And, there ! ye have heard and seen : consider and bow the head.”

THE poverty of Gerard's room was in striking contrast with the splendour of his person. A “ grabat ” or pallet bed, a straw chair or two, a table, a harpsichord, and a large chest containing his wardrobe, formed its only furniture. Many a young Parisian, as gaily dressed as Gerard, and wearing *two* “ montres à répétition ” instead of one, was no better lodged ; and knew as well as he, how to make a single meal, in a fashionable restaurant, suffice for the needs of four-and-twenty hours. In one respect alone Gerard had the advantage over others. His wardrobe included an ample supply of the purest and whitest linen ; for he came from the mountains of Languedoc, and the natives of that province were said to rival the English in their love of clean linen and fresh water.

He took off his torn and blood-stained coat, and with many a muttered “ Peste ! ” and “ Sacre ! ” flung it on his pallet. It was nearly ruined, and the costly ruffles attached to his shirt were sorely damaged. The loss was heavy : these were really his most valuable possessions. “ But, mille tonnerres ! ” he said to himself, “ was I to stand by and see a child trampled to death for fear of spoiling my coat and ruffles ? That would be too much to expect, even

from a philosopher. How can the damage be repaired? Madame Bairdon will perhaps mend the lace, or have it mended, for me. Lace-mending is one of the fine arts in these days." Then, as a picture rose before him of a fair girl with golden hair and the features of Griselle, bending over the injured lace, he stood gazing at the delicate fabric, as if its cunningly devised knots and twisted threads had acquired a mystic charm. "As good as new! Nay, better a thousand times—if mended thus," he thought. "But how am I to wait upon M. le Comte de Caylus, who has had the goodness to command me for next Monday, in such a coat as this? He would take me for a murderer, instead of a musician."

Dreamily unlocking his chest, he drew from its most secret place an *étui* of perfumed morocco, with a golden hinge and clasp. Then, spreading its contents before him, he counted them carefully several times. Nine bright louis d'or were there; but no sleight of hand or trick of brain could make them ten. How miserably insufficient to provide food and clothing, until his art should become something more than a passion and a joy to him! And, whatever else was foregone, his lodging must be paid for. No debt to the Bairdons, especially after to-day's adventure!

With a faint hope that a coin might remain in the *étui*, he searched it carefully, but without success. Yet not long ago it had contained two goodly "rolls of a hundred louis," which had then appeared to the young adventurer an inexhaustible mine of wealth. Gerard's thoughts went back to the day upon which that present reached him, bringing with it no joy, but keen regret and disappointment. For that day destroyed his hopes of embracing a friend who had been to him as a father. Instead of the warm grasp of his patron's hand, and the words of cheer and counsel he expected, he found, at the appointed trysting place, gold to supply his necessities, recommendations to persons of influence in Paris, and a letter, vague though affectionate, announcing an absence of uncertain length.

Eight or ten years ago, Gerard had been a very unwilling pupil at a Jesuit school in Languedoc. An amiable, accomplished young nobleman, with a taste for practical benevolence and a genuine love for the fine arts, had visited the college, and, attracted by the boy's genius, had taken him under his protection, sent him to the musical academy at Rome, and then supplied him with the means of making the tour of the great continental cities. Gerard profited so largely by these advantages, that his gratified patron promised to bring him to Paris, and to watch over his début in the musical circles of the capital with the care of a father. He returned to France in the highest spirits, but only to hear of the sudden departure of M. le Marquis de Chantal, and to receive the letter and the present that had been left for him. That letter, a hundred times re-read, told that the writer was about to seek adventure, freedom—perhaps fame—in the wilds of French Canada. The English, the red men, and stern inhospitable nature, were foes that would keep a man too busy to brood over the mysteries of his own being. "Adieu, my dear child," so the letter concluded. "Be true, be merciful, be pure, and all will go well with thee. If we ever meet again, I may have more to tell thee."

A year passed away, and then Gerard heard of his patron's death, in a skirmish with the Indians. Chantal died alone, and without a will. His name and property passed to distant relatives, who were not friends, and from whom his protégé had nothing to hope. Gerard was thus thrown entirely upon his own resources.

"Be pure, be merciful, be true." Almost daily did he repeat these words to himself. They were his sole code of morality, his sole creed also. He appreciated and delighted in colour, though he had never seen the sun; he believed in truth, in mercy, in purity, though he did not believe in God. Yet in believing so much he was scarcely the child of his generation. The age selected for special admiration one of these three grand prismatic colours (of

which the cardinal seven are the combination and development), almost wholly ignoring the others. The reign of violence and cruelty was passing away. Philosophers proclaimed a crusade against the wheel and the rack. Poets chanted the praises of mercy and humanity with voices that won something of the true poetic charm only when this theme inspired them. But truth? Which of the philosophers would not, like Helvetius, have made an explicit retraction of his favourite theories to escape censure or persecution? Which of the poets would not, like Voltaire, have gone to mass and confession and received the sacrament, if honour and advancement were to be gained thereby? And purity? The moral tone of that brilliant society was inconceivably low. The philosophers of Paris were not much better than the courtiers of Versailles. With a few honourable exceptions, cardinals, prelates, abbés, nobles of the old régime, ladies of fashion, disciples of Voltaire, must be involved in the same condemnation.

Hitherto Gerard had been proud of his creed, had worn it with satisfaction, as he wore his costly lace and velvet. But to-night this spiritual raiment seemed thin and scanty; it could not exclude a certain chill that pierced his heart. He was alone, and lonely. From his attic window he looked down upon the streets and squares of the great city far beneath. He heard the distant hum of her many voices,—that confused murmur of human life which seems so full of glad or of mournful meaning, according to that which “lies already in the hearer’s ear.” There was the arena he must enter alone, to contend for fame, for fortune, for all that makes life precious—for life itself.

Should he succeed—well. Should he fail? There was none to care down yonder. There was none to care above,—beyond those fair faint sunset clouds. But he dared not pursue these thoughts, lest they should lead him to a place he dreaded,—“a land of darkness as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the

light is as darkness." So he turned for consolation, as usual, to his beloved harpsichord. A wild, sweet melody came at his call, like a spirit at the voice of the enchanter. Presently he paused, wondering, as he had often done before, whether the fire that burned within him was the heavenly light of genius, or only the earth-born glare of passion. He reproached himself for time wasted and energy mis-spent, and vowed to begin, that very hour, the composition of a piece that should make his reputation. Wild, plaintive, fanciful it should be—full of fantastic lightness, like the dance of fairies by moonlight. He would call it "Torn Lace." And it should end with a glorious shower of melody, falling over all that had gone before in a flood of golden light, like a maiden's streaming hair.

He tried again, and yet again. In vain ;—the mysterious power that creates, in the soul of artist or poet, does not obey the will. Dreaming that he was composing, as the sluggard dreams he has risen and begun his day's work, he played over old, half-forgotten airs. At last he glided into a sweet and simple mountain melody unthought of for long years. With the music came fragments of the words, which were not without a music of their own :—

“ C'est à Dieu mon Père  
Que j'élève mon cœur ;  
En Lui mon âme espère  
D'une constante ardeur.”

This favourite of his childhood fascinated him, and he lingered over it. While he did so, the bare, dark attic changed to a quaint, home-like room, filled with the glow of blazing chestnut logs. Rough wooden shutters were carefully closed, for there was snow outside. He heard the whirr of a spinning-wheel, and saw a grey-haired woman with a sorrowful countenance bending over it ; and beside her a tall slight figure, a pure pale face—his mother's. There was also a fair young sister, with soft brown eyes, and hair darker than Mademoiselle Griselle's. Was there

a father? He could not tell ; he had a sense of his presence, but no distinct remembrance of his form or features. And as he tried to grasp and retain the vision, it faded utterly ; leaving him only that vague delight which is the peculiar heritage of the poet and the artist, and which repays him for many a bitter hour of conflict, failure, and disappointment.

## CHAPTER III.

### GRISELLE'S STORY.

"Give me but one hour of Scotland,  
Let me see it ere I die."

MADAME BAIRDON, *née* Goudin, marchande de dentelle, Rue Béthizy, was a person of note and power in the Paris of those days. She could show many a scented billet from ladies of the Haute Noblesse, in which she was addressed in terms of the most familiar affection, and pressed to accept favours and attentions without number. But if you enjoyed her confidence, she would laugh and rub her hands, and tell you with an air of engaging frankness, "They are all in my debt, ces grandes dames ; voilà tout, ma chère !" She might have had state secrets in her keeping, and have trafficked for them with ministers and royal favourites ; but she was a prudent woman, she knew the paths of intrigue were perilous, and she had a wholesome fear that they might lead her, as they had led a celebrated modiste of her acquaintance, to the gloomy dungeons of the Bastile.

Reserved towards the great ladies, she was kind and sympathizing to her numerous dependents. Had Madame Suard's fate been hers, she too might have found among her apprentices some gentle girl of seventeen bold enough to assure "Messieurs de la police," though with many blushes, that she would gladly endure a life-long imprisonment if only allowed to wait upon and serve her dear madame.

Griselle, or rather Grizel, Bairdon was of no use in her step-mother's establishment. The Scottish maiden—reserved and shy, and always mindful of her gentle birth—was equally afraid of the cold and stately “grandes dames,” and of the laughing, chattering girls who made the lace and attended the shop. But she was well fitted for the task that fell to her lot that night, of keeping watch beside her suffering brother, bathing his aching head and putting eau sucrée or iced lemonade to his burning lips.

Gustave had borne severe pain bravely: it was an enemy to be fought with and conquered; but for weariness and feverish unrest he had no patience, and he sorely tried the patience of his nurse.

Towards midnight, to her great relief, he fell asleep. As she sat motionless, fearing to disturb him, faint sweet sounds reached her ear through the silence of the night. She knew whence they came, and they soothed her and brought her rest, not for the first time. By-and-by there were words; she could not accurately distinguish them, but she thought the musician must be dreaming of his childhood's home, for his song brought her back to her's. Wild mountains rose before her, dark tracts of moorland stretched away, far as the eye could reach, till they were lost in the purple distance.

Presently Gustave awakened with a moan of pain, and asked for lemonade. Griselle gave it; and grateful to her for sitting up with him, he condescended to acknowledge her services in his own way. “ You are not so bad, Sister Griselle,” he said. “ And now I shall tell you something that will please you.”

Glad to divert his thoughts, she asked, with interest, “ What is it, Gustave? ”

“ Stoop down and listen. M. Gerard is to be asked to dine with us on Sunday.”

“ Is that all? ” said Griselle.

“ All? ” returned Gustave with a shrewd smile. “ But of course *you* don't care to see him.—Though you should have

heard my father and mother discuss the affair. ‘Madame,’ says my father, ‘our lodger has done us a great service ; we must show our gratitude. Let us ask him to dine with us next Sunday ; and you, with your French *savoir-faire*, can then devise the best way of thanking him.’ ‘But,’ my mother argued, ‘he will be too proud to dine with us, of the bourgeoisie.’ ‘In my own land,’ said my father, with the grand air we hardly see once in a year, ‘I held my head high enough, Valérie. Besides,’ he added, ‘M. Gerard himself is not noble.’ ‘Well,’ my mother answered, ‘do as you like. Indeed, you always do.’ I was about to offer a suggestion on the subject of dessert, when she cried out suddenly, ‘But, my friend, it will never do—never !’ ‘Why not ?’ asked my father. ‘There’s my uncle,—poor, good man ! Stay though. I shall write to him, and with all the regrets possible beg him to postpone his weekly visit, as poor Gustave is so ill.’ Griselle, you should have seen my father’s face as he answered, ‘In that case, you may entertain M. Gerard alone, for I shall go and dine with your uncle in his attic.’ ‘Oh,’ said my mother, ‘since you take it au grand sérieux, I suppose the poor man may eat his soup with us as usual. But I shall intimate that he had better keep silence about his miracles and marvels.’ Which I hope she will, and in my hearing. I shall add a hint of my own.”

“Hush, Gustave ! He is your godfather.”

“He is an old fool ! Why, Griselle, he believes in the miracles of St. Médard ; and in the convulsionnaires, with their crucifixions, their ‘secours meurtrières,’ and all the rest of their cheats and absurdities.”

“Did you ever hear him *speak* of these things, Gustave ?”

“Not I, indeed !”

“I did—once only.”

“And what did he say ?” Gustave asked eagerly.

“I shall not tell you. At least, not now. For you would mock and laugh, because he is a Jansenist, and you a scholar of the Jesuits. Yet, Gustave, I sometimes think he is the best and wisest of us all.”

"Wisest! Best!—When he has to thank my mother's charity for his Sunday dinner, I suppose the only dinner he ever eats! What has he got by his sixty years of hard drudgery, but his threadbare soutane and his worn out Breviary? Call me ass and idiot, if I manage no better! If I, by the time I am five-and-twenty, have not made myself—" He fell back suddenly with a groan of pain, having raised himself in his eagerness, and moved the injured limb. "How hot it is!" he said impatiently. "Give me some wine, Griselle."

"We have talked too much, dear," Griselle said gently, giving him a tempting draught of iced wine and water. "You must try to sleep now."

Gustave closed his eyes obediently enough, while Griselle sat still listening to the music. But he did not sleep. During the long half hour that followed, many were the scenes and pictures that rose before him. The most distinct and vivid was that of a crowded court where some "*cause célèbre*" was being pleaded, and all were hanging with breathless attention upon the lips of the eloquent orator, and distinguished advocate, Gustave Adolphe Bairdon.

He knew his cause had reference to the Jesuits, but he did not know on which side he was pleading,—on theirs, or on that of their adversaries. Which side was likely to win? He debated the question with an earnestness that put to flight all hopes of slumber. "Griselle," he said at last, "I can't sleep. Make a tale for me. Not a moral tale though, about good children who get bon-bons and broidered frocks; and wicked ones who eat dry bread and are mocked by their playfellows."

For Griselle often made tales for the amusement of her little brother and sister, Henri and Valérie. They were generally of the kind to which Gustave alluded with such contempt; but sometimes the Highland maiden aimed rather at pleasing herself than at edifying her auditors; and then weird stories of second sight, of pixies and brownies,

—or wild legends of heroic fidelity and terrible revenge, would astonish her youthful hearers. These stories had a wonderful attraction for Gustave. They taught nothing; but they awakened much within him: like stones cast into deep water, they revealed depths hitherto unsuspected there. It was good for the hard, irreverent, worldly-minded lad to have his imagination thus stimulated.

He was rather disappointed when Griselle answered, “Yes, you shall have a tale; but I need not make it, for it is true. That music has awakened me, and brought back things that were long forgotten. I am a little child again; in my home among the mountains, in dear old Scotland.”

“I never saw a mountain,” said the city boy.

“I see mountains always when M. Gerard plays his harpsichord. Now they are bare and brown, now purple with heather, and green with groves of waving birch; and there are streams like threads of silver, falling from the heights and murmuring through the valleys. How cool, and fresh, and free it was on those mountain moorlands far away! How pleasant, in the early summer mornings when the dew was on heath and hairbell and all the world asleep, to look from my little window and see the misty purple light steal over the distant hills, and to hear the shrill cry of the plover and the scream of the curlew! Then, later, the tinkle of sheep bells, or the ring of the blacksmith’s hammer, the sounds of life and labour coming from the village built for protection close to the castle.”

“The castle where my father lived?” interrupted Gustave.

“Yes; the home of his fathers, and his fathers’ fathers, for I knew not how many generations. A narrow gloomy keep tower I should think it now perhaps, *then* it was ‘home’ to me.” (Griselle used the dear familiar English word, for which the French tongue has no equivalent.) “I do not remember seeing my father there, nor can I even recall that day of which he has often told us, when he rode away to join the standard of Prince Charles. My first memories are of walks on the moorland with my mother,

rides on a shaggy mountain pony, and lessons and games in the hall shared with a fair-haired foster-sister. I remember too the quiet Sundays, and the little chapel where no one went but my father's family and servants, and where the priest read prayers in English, not in Latin, for we belonged to the Episcopal Church of Scotland. Then I remember sorrowful days when my mother wept much, because of tidings which came to her from my father. She made me kneel beside her, and taught me to pray with clasped hands that God would take care of him on the sea, and in the land of his exile amongst strangers. After that I played, and rambled over the moorlands as usual, but always without my mother. And then there came a solemn hush and stillness everywhere, which it seemed wrong to break by a laugh or a word spoken loudly, though I knew not why. One morning my nurse took me by the hand and led me to my mother's room. I had not seen her for days; and I felt at first a thrill of joy, then surprise and sudden fear. That white worn face on the pillow was not, yet *was*, my mother's.—There were only a few words spoken, a kiss given, and they took me away. After that, everything grows misty. I seem to lose myself,—until at last I find myself again, playing on the deck of a ship, and looking down with wonder on the white waves; beyond which, they tell me, my father is waiting to welcome me. Here my dream ends. When I grew older, I learned how my father, after the battle of Culloden, escaped to France, and reached Paris destitute and forlorn. How he lodged in this house with your grandparents, the Goudins—had a dangerous illness—was nursed by them and treated with generous kindness. And then—you know the rest, Gustave." Griselle cared not to say more. She was fully aware that her father owed his life to her prosperous bourgeois step-mother; yet undeniably she felt the alliance a degradation.

But Gustave was by this time asleep. The watcher was left to her own thoughts, which were of varied colouring, neither very cheerful, nor yet altogether sad.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A DINNER PARTY.

“The world-wide throes  
That went to make the popedom ; the despair  
Of free men, brave men, good men.”

THE Eighteenth century was an age of Iconoclasm. The destroyer's hand was busy everywhere. Old idols fell before it, all the more easily because they were already crumbling and tottering upon their pedestals. They were hollow with slow decay within ; while, to the careless eye at least, their outward forms remained fair and stately as ever.

But however determinately a generation may pluck up, and pull down, and destroy, no generation can be wholly destructive. Because man was created after the image of God, the great Maker, he must needs try to make. Because man was created to worship, if he know not the living and true God, he must needs make idols for himself.

Many were the idols which philosophers and theorists constructed, to place on the empty pedestals of those that they destroyed. Reason, Liberty, Progress, Humanity, had each its votaries. Yet there were some who preferred to all these the idea of the Family ; who would fain have bestowed upon the hearth that sacredness of which they robbed the altar ; and who expected the regeneration of society from the sweet influences of domestic life. It is singular that this sentimental dream should have haunted Diderot—rudest and coarsest of Atheists and Democrats—

who, himself “a bad husband and a bad father,” thought the affection of husbands and wives, of parents and children, only needed cultivation to make the world a Utopia. In that age of general disorganization, the class that most frequently preserved the sanctities of domestic life were the bourgeoisie. The family circle that met around the table of the Bairdons in the low-ceiled entresol of Numéro 18, Rue Béthizy, might have gladdened the heart of Diderot; and in that great, brilliant, confused world of Paris there were many such, both amongst the grande and the petite bourgeoisie,—simple, well-conducted, attached to each other, and not without respect for those above, and consideration for those beneath them.

Gerard was too young to care for the idea of the family; Liberty, Mercy, Humanity were the idols before which he burned incense. But he liked the Bairdons, and took his seat at their Sunday dinner-table with genuine pleasure.

His quick eye noted every member of the little group—the grave and stately Scotchman, with his tall erect figure and soldier-like bearing; the plump, active, good-humoured French-woman, so proud of her husband, so willing to toil and save that he and his children might be surrounded with comforts and luxuries; Gustave lying on his couch, and claiming as an invalid a double share of all good things; Griselle, doing homage to fashion in a gown of stiff brocaded silk, but wearing her fair hair ‘au naturel;’ the child Henri, dressed like a man of fashion in miniature, with a velvet coat, silk stockings, and a toy sword; and Valérie, still younger, her little frock overloaded with costly lace, and her head encumbered with a grotesque structure like a tower. Madame Bairdon’s uncle, a grey-haired, worn-looking man, in a rusty thread-bare soutane, sat between the children, who evidently looked upon him as their special friend and possession; nor did any one seem inclined to dispute their claim. Madame Bairdon treated him with cold and rather contemptuous civility; M. Bairdon courteously but not cordially, for they had nothing in common save that both

were gentlemen ; while Griselle, who usually atoned for her step-mother's lack of assiduity, was silent and absent, except when the imperious voice of Gustave summoned her to wait upon him.

Gerard, quite at ease with every one else, tried in vain to address himself to her. But he never ceased to see her, his eye followed her slightest movement; and when, leading the children by the hand, she accompanied Madame Bairdon (who conformed so far to the fashions of her husband's country, as to leave the gentlemen for a little while alone over their coffee and their wine), he felt as if the sun had suddenly gone down, and the room was cold and dark.

M. Bairdon, or, as he would far rather have been styled, Bairdon of Glenmair, recalled him to himself. "I am a man of few words," he said ; "but M. Gerard should hear from my own lips the thanks I owe to the brave and generous preserver of my boy."

"Do not speak of that, monsieur," Gerard interrupted. "Any one in my place would have done as I did."

"Not *any* one, monsieur. Few, in our days, would expose themselves to peril for a little bourgeois, who had no claim upon their generous protection, and no right to expect it. I trust Gustave will show himself grateful."

Gustave was heard to mutter something from his couch, but no words were audible, except, "very sorry," "harpsichord," and "never again."

"Have the kindness to say no more, monsieur," Gerard entreated. More would have been said, however, had not the old priest come to the rescue. Raising his head, and fixing upon Gerard dark melancholy eyes that had once been full of fire and energy as Gerard's own, he said with animation, "'Let us do generously and without reckoning, all the good that tempts our hearts, one can never be the dupe of a virtue.'"

"Eh, M. l'Abbé!" cried Gerard, "you are quoting the maxims of Vauvenargues."

"And why not?" asked the priest with a smile.

Gerard could not say that Madame Bairdon, when inviting him, had described her uncle as a harmless piece of antiquity, quite behind the age, and only fit to drone over his Breviary, say mass, and hear confessions.—At last he answered, "I did not suppose, M. l'Abbé, that your studies lay in that direction."

"Nor do they," said the priest. "But I have studied Vauvenargues, and with deep though painful interest."

"May I ask," said Gerard, "why you selected Vauvenargues in preference to others who have gone farther than he in the same path?"

"Chiefly because Vauvenargues seems to me the Pascal of Deism."

Bairdon, suppressing a yawn, filled his own glass and those of his companions, while Gerard answered, "I know Vauvenargues better than Pascal; not so well as Voltaire."

"There speaks the child of the age!" said the priest. "Yet surely it were well for you to know the man whom Voltaire reverenced."

"Ah!" said Gerard brightening. "That must indeed have been a rare spirit which won not only love, but actual veneration from the patriarch himself! What a star looks up to must needs be lofty." A piece of bombast which only Gerard's youth and the taste of the day could render excusable.

"Messieurs," said Bairdon, with some embarrassment, and a glance at Gustave, who was listening eagerly to the conversation—"Messieurs, you would oblige me by being a little more cautious. No doubt M. de Voltaire is a great genius, and I have no objection to—to the 'Henriade,' for instance. But you will acknowledge that he has written some things calculated to corrupt and mislead the young and unstable."

"Many things," said the old priest sadly. "And if God ever speaks to the heart of M. de Voltaire, he will wish he had never been born rather than have penned them. Still I say, if the Marquis de Vauvenargues had been alive, 'La

Pucelle' would never have been written at all, and 'Candide' would have been written far otherwise."

"You wrong the patriarch," said Gerard, with some warmth. "It is because he is the enemy of cruelty, of intolerance, of priesthood— But I pray you to pardon me, M. l'Abbé," he said, breaking off in some confusion.

"There is no occasion, monsieur," the priest returned courteously. "I may have suffered in my time from intolerance; but I trust that has not made me intolerant. Let us return to Vauvenargues. His evident earnestness and sincerity awaken my interest; and, like all men who inspire reverence, he himself knows how to revere."

"And yet," Gerard interposed, "you implied just now that M. de Voltaire is a man not very prone to revere; while even you must admit that no man was ever more passionately—worshipped, I may almost say."

"Worship is not reverence," said the priest. "Does the savage revere the idol he bows down before to-night, and to-morrow casts into the fire because he has returned unsuccessful from the chase? Believe this, my young friend, when a man has ceased to reverence God, he ceases very soon to reverence his own soul. And if he acknowledges nothing sacred in himself, his fellow-men may do homage to his splendid gifts, they may even build an altar and burn incense before him;—but true reverence they will never pay him. When M. de Voltaire thinks fit to repudiate a piece that he has written, solemnly denying that he even knows the author's name"—

"This is not fair, monsieur," Gerard interrupted impatiently. "An attack upon a man's character is the worst possible argument against his opinions."

"I am not at present arguing against the opinions of M. de Voltaire; but trying to show that, although he may be idolised, he is not revered."

"Pardon me, monsieur—he *is* revered, and shall be to the latest generations, as a man who has taught the world great and noble truths."

"And these truths, monsieur? Will you name them?"

"He has overthrown superstition," said Gerard.

"You overrate the influence of M. de Voltaire," the priest returned quietly. "He leads his generation, but he is also led by it. He resumes its tendencies in himself, he formulates and gives them brilliant expression; but he has not made them, nor does he carry them out to their legitimate consequences. Others continue his work, and go much farther than he does. D'Alembert, Diderot, Helvetius——"

"'Small change for Voltaire,'" laughed Gerard.

"That, and much more. But your view is natural at your age. You young men expect everything from personal influence. You are always looking out for a hero, and holding your hearts in readiness to lay at his feet. Therein you do well; and perhaps you are nearer a great truth than you think, for it is God's way to send salvation to his people by the hands of a man—a hero. But not by hands unclean, as those of M. de Voltaire. I wish you a better hero, M. Gerard."

"Yet, suppose he *had* overthrown what you call superstition, what truth has he revealed? To destroy falsehood is not necessarily to reveal truth. You find a man perishing with thirst about to drink from a poisoned spring. You dash the cup from his lips—so far, well; but if you give him no water, how have you helped him?"

"But there is water given; there are positive truths revealed," said Gerard.

"Once more, monsieur, will you oblige me by naming them?"

Gerard, with an air of pride and satisfaction, quoted a maxim of the prophet's: "'Love God, but love mortals also.'"

Bairdon, who had been for some time looking impatient, could contain himself no longer. "M. Gerard is enjoying a little jest at your expense, my friend," he said to the

priest. "He is pretending to give you the sentiments of Voltaire, and quoting the Bible instead."

"Monsieur," said the priest gravely, "I believe you have gone straight to the heart of the matter, with the proverbial directness of your nation. I shall do well if I convince this young gentleman that whatever *truth* Voltaire teaches was taught long ago by One whom Voltaire, in his folly, blasphemes and derides."

"It was certainly not taught, for many generations, by the priests of your religion, M. l'Abbé," said Gerard.

The priest took out his Breviary, found, and pointed to the words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."

"Ay; it was acknowledged in words, but denied in fact, systematically and persistently," Gerard replied. "It is as though I said," he added, with a smile, "'I love my dear young friend Gustave as I love myself; but he shall toil and starve that I may eat the fat and drink the sweet; he shall be burned, racked, or scourged to death the moment he dares to resist my will.'

Gustave, who had been listening with fixed attention, considered this reference to himself as an invitation to join the conversation. "If your dear young friend had not sense enough to take the winning side, he would deserve all you could do to him," he said. "What could you expect? The priests were learned and clever; so they had their way, and trampled on everything that opposed them. Now it is they who are stupid, while the philosophers are clever. I am a philosopher, M. Gerard."

The old priest looked very mournfully into the keen, hard, boyish face. "God help thee, poor child!" he said; "thou art old, and hast never been young. Pray God to make thee, in very truth, a little child, so shalt thou enter the kingdom of heaven."

"I know nothing of entering the kingdom of heaven," said Gustave pertly; "I want the kingdom of earth."

"Child, your wants are the greater because you know them not. But such is the training the Jesuits give their pupils," said the Jansenist with a sigh. Then, resuming his argument, "I understand you, M. Gerard. But are you not doing with regard to the ministers of religion what you objected to my doing with regard to Voltaire?"

"No, monsieur," Gerard said with warmth; "surely it is fair to infer the character of a system from its effects. And what, hitherto, have been those of the Christian religion?"

"Schools, hospitals, infirmaries, food and clothing for the poor; so at least I heard in my youth," the Scotchman threw in drily.

"Schools like those of the Jesuits! Hospitals and infirmaries like the Hôtel Dieu and the Bicêtre! Help to the poor and miserable, like that given at St. Lazare!"

"Pray explain yourself, monsieur."

"I will, as far as I dare, especially before this boy. The Jesuits have done much for the cause of education in France; so have the Christian Brethren, whose excellent schools owe their origin to the great Jansenist party. Yet in the Jesuit system of education there are glaring faults. Too often intolerance and cruelty have filled their schools, extortion has maintained them, and the spirit of finesse and management has made them nurseries of intrigue and conspiracy. However, France has now well-nigh decided the cause of the Jesuits; and M. l'Abbé will agree with me that it is cowardly to strike a falling foe. Rather let us praise them, because what the Church of France did *not*, that they tried to do. The Church of France, messieurs, has in her hands at this moment an enormous proportion of the property of the country, and her immense revenues are exempt from ordinary taxation. Yet, in return for that well-nigh boundless wealth, she will not even teach poor Jacques, who starves at her stately gates, to read and write and say his catechism. Messieurs, in the district where I was born, the majority of the population are Protestants. The laws—

laws framed by Churchmen, or for them—take their children from these sectaries (by force if needful), and send them to Catholic schools. Think you that the Church, in her charity, *provides* the education she forces upon these worse than orphaned little ones? No; it is the heart-broken parents that must pay for it, to the uttermost farthing! From that one fact, infer a hundred, and spare me the pain of detailing what it wrings my heart to recall."

Gerard paused; his hearers looked at him in surprise, but with different thoughts. "A clever young man, who has acquired a singular amount of information for his years," thought Bairdon. "An honest-hearted youth, after all, and a great foe of the Jesuits," thought the Jansenist priest. "It may be he is not far from the kingdom of heaven." "A pupil of the Jesuits, who was ill-treated at one of their schools," guessed the shrewd Gustave. "Now, if they would get him a good benefice, he might change his tone."

Gerard presently resumed with energy. "From schools, messieurs, turn to hospitals. The heart is the standard of the body's health. France is the heart of Christendom, Paris the heart of France. In this world-renowned Paris, can you point proudly to the Hôtel Dieu, the house of God, where He lodges his guests, the sick poor? Go thither, if you dare. You will see four or five miserable patients thrown together into one wretched bed, whence neglect, mismanagement, and the lack of all things hurries them quickly, to another, where at least there is no more pain. Do you know that out of every nine patients who enter those fatal gates (often for very trivial maladies) two, at least, come not forth alive? If this be Christian charity, it is charity that kills! But I restrain myself, for it is *not* Christian charity. Your prelates with their princely revenues, your abbés with their priceless lace and matchless jewellery, are too poor to afford the patients of the Hôtel Dieu their miserable dole of bread and tisane. It is the spectacles of Paris—the *theatres*—that support its one great hospital. The Church

denies the actor Christian burial—stamps his calling as infamous, soul-destroying,—yet takes the hard-earned fruit of his toil to supply her own lack of service. Baser than those of old, who shrank from bringing into the treasury the price of blood, the priests of France offer their God, for his poor, the blood of the actor's soul! Turn from the Hôtel Dieu to the Bicêtre, to——”

“ Nay, monsieur,” Bairdon interrupted. “ You have said quite enough to prove that the charities of Paris are badly managed, and the priests far from what they should be. No one here doubts it. Indeed, I myself could tell more than one story much to the point, were I not restrained by the respect due to my esteemed guest M. Goudin.”

The priest bowed gravely, and Gerard took the hint so far as to make his attack a little less personal, and to disregard Gustave's muttered suggestion—“ That fine Church of St. Sulpice, too, built with the proceeds of a lottery ! ” He resumed, “ You will say the age is degenerate, and the glory of the Catholic Church in great measure departed. You are right: the Church has had her golden era, when the State was but her humble and submissive handmaid, and all her enemies were beneath her feet.”

Here Goudin interposed, “ I frankly acknowledge, monsieur, that the Middle Ages were times of much ignorance and disorder.”

“ The Middle Ages ! ” Gerard cried scornfully. “ Do you think I was going back to their old-world horrors and absurdities ? Though, I may remark, it is no thanks to the Catholic Church that we ever got out of them. The revival of learning—the invention of printing—the Reformation, began the new day, whose light hour by hour increases and shall increase, until the glorious coming time, when superstition and intolerance are swept away, and man, the true king of the universe, the lord of all things, shall rule and reign for ever and ever ! ”

“ It is a noble dream ! ” the priest said, looking with admiration and interest upon the young enthusiast. “ But

if man has not yet learned to rule himself, how shall he rule the world?"

"Better, at least, than did the Catholic Church. Look at the age of her triumph in this realm—the age of Louis, miscalled the Great."

"So vaunted by the philosophers, so lauded by Voltaire," the priest observed quietly. Perhaps the taunt was scarcely generous; but who is always generous in the heat of battle?

"So vaunted by every one," Gerard frankly allowed. "A brilliant epoch, alike for the arms, the arts, the literature of France. And for the Church, the culminating epoch of her glory. The age of Bossuet, of Bourdaloue, of Fléchier, of Massillon—ay, and of Fénelon and the Port Royalists. Louis Quatorze, converted and penitent, was on the throne; Bossuet was in the pulpit. An absolute monarch lent his sceptre to an absolute Church; and France lay beneath it—inert, prostrate, dumb."

"But are you not forgetting," said the priest mildly, "the noble resistance opposed to ecclesiastical tyranny by the free Gallican spirit?"

"No. Nor yet the services rendered to humanity by the Jansenists, and the bitter thanks they received from the holy Catholic Church. But how can I listen to the wail of the exiled nuns of Port Royal, while my ears are ringing with the groans, the cries, the agonies with which the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes filled the land? Oh, M. l'Abbé, that story has yet to be read by the civilised world, in all its horror, its pathos, and I dare to add, its glory too! What are your boasted *Acta Sanctorum* beside it? Can they match the cruelty on one side, the endurance on the other? Of the endurance I speak not now. To me it is a sublime and solemn mystery, like the midnight starry sky. But the cruelty! Call up the myrmidons of Diocletian, the soldiers of Mahomet, the priests of Montezuma, and they will look angels of mercy beside the 'booted missionaries' of the most Christian king, and the priests and Jesuits that inspired and directed them! But I forget myself," Gerard

said, his tone suddenly changing from deep emotion to mournful, almost listless, calm. "I speak I know not what, or how. Allow me to resume. In that great age of the Church, when she sat enthroned in splendour, where were the People?"

"*The People?*" the priest repeated with an air of perplexity.

"Yes, the People—the masses—the suffering, toiling millions—who are not nobles, nor priests, nor even bourgeois—only *men*, men that till the ground, and pay the taille, the corvée, the gabelle, the aides—what message had the Catholic Church for these? What word for them had Bossuet, her eloquent mouthpiece, her able representative? When Louise de la Vallière took the veil (these churchmen were very tender to the vices of most Christian kings), Bossuet could pour forth the treasures of his eloquence, for the tears of the great and noble were priceless jewels, to be gathered up and set in the wrought gold of his stately periods, while the tears of tortured millions fell unheeded on the soil they delved to enrich others. The eagle of Meaux was too busy gazing on the sun of royalty to have one glance, one thought for these. He was like the rest. 'During all that triumphal era, the people escape our search. La Bruyère only affords us a glimpse of them, half buried in the furrows they are digging; and an impotent and passing insurrection lets us see them for a moment in some cruelly frivolous lines of Madame de Sévigné. That is all.'\* Yet I have heard preachers say it was for these Christ died."

"In fine, messieurs, the Catholic Church has ignored, denied, trampled upon Humanity. Voltaire has raised it from the dust, set it on a pedestal, embraced it, appealed to it. The Catholic Church has despised Nature, discouraged all study of her works and ways, crushed out science wherever she could. The philosophers cultivate science, and

\* Vinet. All the facts alluded to in this chapter are substantiated by contemporary records, and more of the same kind might be added almost *ad infinitum*.

recognise Nature as their teacher, their guide, their noblest study. They anatomize the frame and analyze the mind of man. They weigh and measure the earth, and dive into her secret chambers. Everywhere they seek truth, and they reverence Humanity. Therefore, messieurs, I am of the Church of M. de Voltaire and the Philosophers."

A silence ensued, of which Bairdon, tired out by the discussion, took advantage to leave the disputants to themselves and rejoin his wife. She reproached him for his want of courtesy and tact. " You should have known how to stop my uncle's lengthy periods," she said. " Did I not ask you, at the first pause, to pray M. Gerard to do us the favour of accompanying us to the Boulevards to see the mariolettes ? "

" They never paused at all till now," Bairdon answered. " M. Gerard himself has been the chief speaker. And I will not disturb them now ; for the priest must have his turn, and answer him, if he can. Fair play for ever. Thou and I can go to the Boulevards, and let the young folk follow at their leisure."

" Fi donc, mon cher ! wilt thou never learn to respect the proprieties ? " Madame Bairdon cried, horror-stricken at the thought of Gerard and Griselle walking the Boulevards together without an escort, though more than willing they should do so under her own and her husband's protection. " No, mon ami ; since thou hast managed so badly, we must wait for the end of their tiresome discussions about what no one knows or cares to know. Ma foi ! where is the use of talking of philosophy and religion ? I know how to sell my lace at a good figure, and to use the gold I get for it in purchasing all we can desire ; and what more could philosophy teach me ? "

" Or religion either ? " asked her husband with a half-amused, half-doubtful air.

" No one can reproach us with neglecting religion," said Madame Bairdon, in the tone of one whose respectability was undeservedly called in question. " I go to mass and

confession ; so does Griselle ; and Gustave has taken his first communion, though I had hard work to persuade him to it. I do everything that is right, in my position," said this amiable Pharisee, who, like many a Pharisee, was at heart a Sadducee, really believing in what she saw and touched, and in little else.

## CHAPTER V.

### WHAT THE PRIEST SAID.

"I say the acknowledgment of God in Christ,  
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee  
All questions in the earth and out of it."

BROWNING.

BAIRDON of Glenmair had withdrawn, closing the door behind him. Gerard had ceased to speak, and sat with flushed cheeks and parted lips, gazing into the old priest's perplexed and sorrowful face. There was a pause; then gradually the old man's brow cleared, his eye kindled, and at last he spoke. "I am not careful to answer you concerning these things," he said. "God established his Church in the world, but He left men to administer it; there, I doubt not, is the clue to the mystery. But I entreat you to remember that the problem contains elements other than the Catholic Church and Humanity. It concerns yourself, your needs, your dangers, your destinies. What of these, M. Gerard?"

"Oh! as for me," said Gerard, "I shall triumph in the triumph of Humanity—in truth, in freedom, in nature—in the full and joyous satisfaction of all my propensities, those only excepted which are hurtful to my fellow-men."

"Suppose that—like thousands who have gone before you—you never see the triumph of Humanity, never find truth, never win freedom?"

"I have still—myself."

"Of yourself death will rob you."

"I think not. I am rather disposed," said Gerard, with the air of one who makes large concession, "to believe in the existence of God, and, perhaps, in the immortality of the soul."

"Ah! you account these doctrines, if not probable, at least convenient? You feel that your scheme of the world halts somewhere, and needs, to make it perfect, a judgment to come, and a judge to give sentence? So, like Voltaire, you are willing for the present to accord a conventional homage to an 'invented God?' But you are too sincere, too ardent for that creed. To you, God must be more or nothing. You will either return to Christianity, or advance to the open Atheism already avowed by Diderot, Helvetius, D'Holbach."

"Or else," said Gerard thoughtfully, "I may, as so many around me are doing, exchange the cold and reasoning Deism of Voltaire for the passionate Deism of Jean Jacques Rousseau."

"Not likely. Transports of devout affection towards an unknown God ring false to the ear and hollow to the heart. They may be the best thing Deism has to offer the soul of man, but you will not find them sustain yours. Amidst a feast of rare wines and choice confections you will hunger and suffer thirst, for you will have spent your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not. At present, however, you are not worshipping either the God of Reason or the God of Sentiment; you are worshipping Humanity."

"And Nature—Truth—Freedom," Gerard hastened to add.

"But in your human soul there is a great need which neither the God of Voltaire, nor the God of Rousseau, nor yet Humanity, Nature, Truth, Freedom, can avail to satisfy. We were speaking just now of M. de Vauvenargues. His acquaintance was a privilege you are too young to have enjoyed, but your literary friends must have spoken to you of him. You may even remember to have seen him, in your earliest childhood."

"I was not then in Paris," said Gerard, flattered nevertheless at being taken for a Parisian, and a probable acquaintance of marquises and philosophers. "But I have heard the story of his life—I know how the brave soldier, invalided in the wars of his country, sought in vain from a corrupt government employment that would have given scope to his genius, and satisfied his honourable ambition—how shadows, darker even than disappointment and obscurity, fell upon him early: disease, blindness, long years of weakness and suffering, closed by an untimely death which yet for him seemed a deliverance."

Thus briefly did Gerard retrace a story none the less full of pathos because it was true of the French philosopher as of the English poet that—

"When one by one sweet sounds and wandering lights departed,  
He wore no less a loving face because so broken-hearted."

Amongst the writers of the age, Vauvenargues and Rousseau stand pre-eminent for sensibility; only, contrary to what might have been expected, the marquis of the old régime felt chiefly for others, the Genevan watchmaker's son for Jean Jacques Rousseau.

"Truly my heart yearns over that noble nature," the priest confessed.

"And yet, in spite of his blameless life, you would consign him to everlasting perdition and torture, because on his death-bed he refused the sacraments of the Church, and chose to die without her pale, calmly 'returning,' as he said, 'into the bosom of Infinite Mercy.'"

"Nay," the priest replied with deep humility, "I judge him not. 'All souls are mine,' the Master saith; and who am I, the meanest of his servants, that He should confide to me his pleasure concerning them? Yet this I know. I had rather Vauvenargues' soul, or thine, or mine, were in the hands of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, than in those of the God of the philosophers. Vauvenargues himself has said, that 'at least it is impossible not

to *wish* the Christian religion to be true.' And again, 'The greatest geniuses, in the greatest fulness of their powers, have believed in and loved Jesus Christ.' He yearned towards Him, longed for Him, felt after Him. Did he find Him? God of the spirits of all flesh, thou alone canst tell!"

"I see," said Gerard, "that your faith does not make all things clear and certain to you."

"All things are not clear and certain to any save God," the priest answered. "And the only voice that ever promised, 'Ye shall be as gods,' was the voice of the tempter."

"Then wherein are you better than we?"

"Herein, that we know One to whom all things are clear and certain. You and I, M. Gerard, are travelling blindfold through an untrodden land to an unseen goal. But I have joined a company under the guidance of One who sees, and who knows the way from its first step to its last."

Gerard might have been more impressed if the priest had spoken of holding in his the warm and living hand of his Guide; but this would have been Protestantism, and François Goudin was not a Protestant.

"What!" said Gerard, "we philosophers are enlightening the world, and you call us blind?"

"What do you call yourselves when the world's bewildering voices are hushed, and your hearts speak aloud in the silence? Hear Vauvenargues, perhaps the deepest thinker amongst you, and the most loyal to his own convictions. Daring as he was in speculation, he owned one mystery unsolved; brave as he was in action, one dark dread overhung his sky like a thunder-cloud, and would not pass or be dispelled. In Scripture phrase, 'through fear of death,' he was 'all his lifetime subject to bondage.' "

"Yet when his hour came, he died with heroic calmness," said Gerard.

"Outwardly, yes: for he was Vauvenargues. But see him when he unveils the secret places of his soul. Now it is a quotation, like that from La Rochefoucauld—'There are two things that cannot be looked at steadily, the sun

and death.' Then, an epigrammatic hint, 'The thought of death deceives us, for it makes us forget to live.' Again, a cry of pain, escaping as if unawares from those patient lips, 'The necessity to die is the most bitter of our afflictions.' And once more, a noble thought, only needing the illumination of faith to make it sublime, 'To do great things we must live as if we should not die.' Thus ever, underneath all, you hear the same low murmur—that moan of the dark and restless sea that encompasses this little island of our life."

"He knows all now, for he has crossed the sea," Gerard said softly. "But other ears do not hear what his did."

"It is the finest ear that hears most. Besides, others may not pause to listen, or may drown the murmur in nearer and louder noises."

"M. de Voltaire, for instance, seems troubled by no such mysterious murmurs," Gerard said. "Nothing ever reaches *his* ear that he cannot understand and describe."

"And laugh at? You may live to acknowledge, M. Gerard, that Voltaire, as thinker, has misunderstood the heart of things; as poet, has failed to catch the deeper harmonies of life and nature. But as man, he is just as you are, a living soul, standing ignorant and helpless between the mysteries of life and death. If you were only mind, reason, pure intelligence, perhaps philosophy might satisfy you; but since you are not simply a mind, but a *man*, with a soul that needs life, a conscience that needs peace, a heart that needs love, you must have something more, or remain unsatisfied."

"What more?" asked Gerard.

"What has satisfied the wants of ten thousand times ten thousand. Nor has it failed with natures deep and high as Vauvenargues'. Jesus Christ suffices for genius and thinker, for poet and philosopher, as well as for the poor man at his toil or the priest over his breviary. Hear the witness of that great man whom Vauvenargues resembled, not in his genius alone, but also in the circumstances of his life. To

Blaise Pascal, as to Vauvenargues, were appointed those wearisome days and nights of pain which take the life out of life. He too, like Vauvenargues, went straight to the inmost heart of things ; and if ever any man saw vanity and vexation of spirit written there, he did. If sometimes he appeared to feel less than Vauvenargues the mournfulness of death, it was because he felt so profoundly the mournfulness of life. Yet see him, in that lonely midnight hour when first the love of Christ, which is the heart and centre of Christianity, breaks upon his soul. He weeps—but he writes upon the blotted page, ‘Joy, joy ! tears of joy ! This is life eternal, that I might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.’ And before and after these come broken disjointed words, meant for no human eye save his own—faint inadequate utterances of unutterable joy, the joy of a soul that has found its resting-place.”

“But,” said Gerard, “may not this have been merely a poetic rapture, a thrill and glow of the imagination, like that I feel when the spirit of some glorious melody sweeps by me, touching me in the dark ?”

“A thoughtful question, my young friend. But no ; the Christian’s joy is not that of the poet or the artist ; not wine for the chosen few, but water of which all may drink. And it lasts. Pain, sickness, trouble, all those things that disturb the artist’s joy and dim his vision, only make that of the Christian clearer, brighter, more intense. We have heard Vauvenargues upon the great mystery, which both he and La Rochefoucauld confessed they could not look on steadily. Now hear Pascal—‘I expect death in peace, in the hope of being united with Christ for ever.’ And again —seeing all the darkness, all the mystery Vauvenargues saw, but seeing the light of God beyond it—‘Without Christ death is horrible, detestable, the horror of nature. In Christ all is changed, death becomes amiable, holy, the joy of the faithful. In Christ all is sweet, even death ; for He suffered and died, that He might sanctify death and suffering.’

"My friend, it is in its relation to human life that you must regard Christianity. The problems of life are its wants. If Christianity satisfies the wants, it has solved the problems. If it make life, which without it were a desolate wilderness, rejoice and blossom as the rose—if it make death, without it the great dread of humanity, the object of hope and the gate of everlasting life, it must be a faith good to live by, to die in—ay, and at need to die for. As we said just now, the philosophers, fearing lest man should drink some deadly thing, dash the cup from his lips, and forget that he is perishing with thirst; while that which we, who preach the faith of Christ, offer to his need is no poison, but living water—*living*, for it fails not to sustain and satisfy the living soul."

"M. l'Abbé," said Gerard, "you do not speak like other priests. In one respect you resemble the philosophers whom you condemn; you recognise humanity."

"Who ever recognised, who ever loved humanity as did He who became the Son of Man, 'who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven?'"

"You churchmen always merge the individual in the Church."

"That is one of the mistakes against which it has been the mission of the Jansenists to protest. The followers of Jansenius, of Arnauld, of Nicole, have constantly maintained the cause of spiritual life and freedom, and sought to bring the soul of each man face to face with God."

"But—excuse me, M. l'Abbé—as a party the Jansenists are stained with the wildest excesses. They believe in miraculous cures, and trances, and visions. They delude wretched women into allowing themselves to be beaten, tortured, even crucified, and pretending they enjoy it."

The priest rose from the table, and withdrew to a window at the other end of the apartment. Gerard feared he had offended him, but was reassured by seeing that he beckoned him to follow. He obeyed, and they stood together looking out upon the court-yard.

## CHAPTER VI.

THIRTY YEARS AGO.

"The young heart hot and restless,  
And the old subdued and slow."

"**M.** GERARD," said Goudin, in tones low enough to baffle the curiosity of Gustave—"M. Gerard, I am moved to tell you the story of my life. Perhaps it may help you, at some other time, if not now."

"At all events, monsieur, it will interest me," Gerard answered courteously.

"I dare not speak of helping you or any man," said the old priest, with the sad humility habitual to him, "save in so far as one who has suffered and made mistakes may serve as a warning, perhaps as a comfort to others."

"Thirty years ago, when the Bull Unigenitus became the law of the land, and all who refused to acknowledge it the subjects of a vexatious persecution, I was an ardent young priest, full of fire and zeal. I believed, and verily I still believe, that the oppressed Jansenists were contending for truth and freedom. As you do now, I thought much of truth and freedom, and little—far too little—of Him who is the Truth, and whose service is perfect freedom. No one was more active or more fearless in administering the rites of the Church to those who had been refused 'billets of confession' on account of their Jansenist opinions. The Deacon Pâris was my intimate friend, he was one of the 'holy and humble men of heart,' full of charity and of

unobtrusive self-denial. His untimely death, the triumph of the Jesuits, the oppression of our friends, made the first great cloud that shut out heaven and darkened earth for me. When the remains of Pâris were laid in the cemetery of St. Médard, I wept long and bitterly over the grave since become so famous, and then turned sadly away repeating the Psalmist's words, 'Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath He in anger shut up his tender mercies for ever?'

"But soon a sudden, dazzling light illumed our darkness. Others went, as I did, to weep and pray over that lowly grave. Amongst them were many of the poor, of the blind and lame, to whom the good man was wont to minister. Picture, if you can, the thrill of rapture with which we heard that the Lord had visited His people—that at that grave the lame man leaped as an hart, the deaf heard, and the blind saw. With hearts full of solemn awe and wondering joy, we praised the God of heaven and earth, the same now as in the first ages of the church, when He stretched out his hand, and mighty signs and wonders followed the preaching of the Word."

The old man's eye brightened, and his faded cheek glowed with the fires of youth. Nearly every life worth living has some chapter in its past ever recalled with such emotion.

Gerard looked surprised. "Is it possible, monsieur," he said, "that you really believe in those pretended—well, let us say imagined—miracles of St. Médard?"

"Young man, it is easy to say imagined, or pretended, but not so easy to dispose of the question."

"You are not offended with my freedom, I hope, monsieur?" said Gerard anxiously. Young as he was, he had learned that it is less dangerous to attack a man's most cherished convictions than his favourite illusions.

But the priest's frank smile and kindly manner re-assured him. "Many years ago," he said, "I knew a man called François Goudin, who would have resented the slightest hint

of disbelief in those miracles as though it had been a slander against his father's honour, his mother's name. But he is dead long since, and the old man you see in his place has learned to keep silence and put his mouth in the dust, knowing this best of all, that he knows nothing. It was the fate of the young François Goudin to be immured for three years amongst fools and madmen, under the care of the monks of Charenton."

Gerard looked at him with increased interest. He never imagined for a moment that he might have been really insane ; he only wondered for what political offence he had been thus incarcerated.

" I had written a pamphlet maintaining the genuineness of the St. Médard miracles," Goudin continued. " It seems to me now but a foolish performance, which the ruling party might have passed over in contemptuous silence. But they thought otherwise, and paid me my wages."

" Bitter wages," Gerard said.

" Not all bitter. My lot had many alleviations. I learned much from my poor companions, of whom the most rational imagined himself Louis XV., and must needs be called ' La France.' I acquired a deep distrust of the senses, when under the influence of an excited or disordered fancy. I gained an intimate knowledge of certain forms of disease, and of the mysterious powers wherewith they endow, for a season, the frame and the mind of man. But I learned better things than these ; else these might have made me as mad as my poor unconscious teachers. I saw the lovingkindness of the Lord in the darkest places of the earth. I learned that no cloud, not even the cloud of madness, is too dense for His love to pierce. I might have fainted when forced to doubt that the power of God was made manifest in the so-called cure of Étienne the cripple, had I not felt Him near the peaceful death-bed of my friend La France. Whether or no Christ says now to the lame, ' Arise and walk,' He surely says to the weary and heavy-laden, ' I will give you rest.' But I wander from my

text. I was released ; with a shattered constitution, but a heart still fresh and young. Joyfully and eagerly I went back to my old friends. But they were changed. And of what followed I cannot speak calmly, even yet. Enough, my heart was broken."

"Do not speak of what gives you pain, monsieur," Gerard said kindly.

"One word only, and for your sake, who have learned so early to see through illusions. During my imprisonment I had gone forward in my own path, and so had my friends in theirs. As day by day, and with keenest interest, I watched those mysterious maladies which haunt the border land between mind and body, I grew less and less inclined to raise the cry, 'Behold a miracle !' at every unexplained phenomenon, such as a vision, a trance, or a suspension of susceptibility to pain. Meanwhile my friends had travelled fast and far, and, if all must be told, upon a dangerous road. Every step widened the gulf between us." The old man paused, while a look of profound, though quiet, sorrow overspread his face.

"I suppose you are aware, monsieur," Gerard ventured to say, "that M. La Condamine and other savants—enlightened and impartial men—have recently examined those so-called miracles, and even witnessed the crucifixion of two of the convulsionnaires ; and that they pronounce the whole affair a tissue of fraud and delusion."

"Wisdom will not die with the savants, and M. La Condamine, though he knows how to measure the earth, cannot lay rule or plumb-line to the soul of man," returned the priest with a tinge of asperity. "Delusion I am forced to admit, but farther I need not and I will not go. No man deceives others so completely as he who deceives himself first. Miracles are dangerous playthings, and there is deep truth in that word of Vauvenargues, 'He who desires illusions shall have them beyond his desire.' God can send down fire from heaven when He pleases, and He *has* sent it. But if his priests and prophets must needs have

the wonder repeated when *they* please, they end by offering strange fire upon his altar, and He will put them to shame before their enemies. In separating myself from the convulsionnaires, I did no more than other sober and moderate Jansenists. But what was a light thing to others was the bitterness of death to me ; for I had expected the regeneration of the Church and of the world—I had made idols and bowed down before them, only to see them discrowned and dishonoured and dragged in the dust."

"I can understand the anguish of your disappointment," Gerard said.

"It was aggravated by loneliness of heart, a loneliness which has been my portion ever since, though the sting has left it long ago. My old associates called me renegade and traitor, while my old enemies called me enemy still. And *that* I would not have wished otherwise. Though forced to keep a shamed and sorrowful silence, never—never—could I take part against the friends who had been to me as my own soul. But it was from within that the worst anguish came. Doubting so much, I was tempted to doubt all. For a while, nothing seemed certain."

"Ah !" said Gerard eagerly, "did it not occur to you that other miracles—other marvels—like those of St. Médard——?"

"It did," the priest avowed. "So like the tinsel looked to the true gold, that I found no rest to my soul until I placed them side by side, weighed both in the balances, and tested them by a searching analysis."

It struck Gerard with something like surprise that a reasonable man might do all this, yet continue a believer in Revelation. "With what results?" he asked.

"Briefly these," the priest answered. "The cures recorded in the New Testament differ from those alleged in modern times, by being uniform and unfailing in their operation. Only a small number amongst the multitudes who resorted to the tomb of Páris even professed to receive a cure. While of the Son of God it is testified 'as many

as touched Him were made perfectly whole.' The Gospel miracles, moreover, were morally significant. I know nothing taught by the St. Médard miracles, except that the Jansenists are in the right, and *that* I think might have been learned without them. But take up and examine the marvels that strew the Gospel page, and you will find each wonderful in moral significance, true to all truth, and full of holy teaching. They were wrought for ends worthy the interposition of God. How else was the mission of the Divine Son to be authenticated, and a new religion introduced into the world? A little thought given to that problem would be better than many arguments. Besides, they were wrought in the presence of friend and foe, of believer and unbeliever. They were wrought upon persons of all ages, conscious and unconscious, even upon inanimate objects. And lastly (for I should weary you far sooner than exhaust my subject), they were of a kind which utterly precludes the idea of fraud or delusion, or even of the operation of an excited imagination. Modern cures, purporting to be miraculous, deal with one class of diseases only. When I see eyes literally given to those born blind, lepers cleansed with a word, unconscious fever patients healed miles away—above all, *the dead raised*, I shall begin to reconsider the matter.

"The most searching investigation only confirms the verdict already pronounced by the common sense of mankind. The miracles of St. Médard have well-nigh ruined a good cause, which had a fair chance of success without them; the miracles of Christ established His mission in the face of a hostile and unbelieving generation, and prepared the way for the conversion of the world."

Here, to Gerard's regret, their conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Madame Bairdon, in all the dainty neatness of a Frenchwoman's outdoor toilet. "Will M. Gerard condescend to honour us with his escort to the Boulevards?" she asked. "We shall enjoy the evening air and see the marionettes."

Gerard hesitated a moment and glanced at the priest ; who, however, decided his movements by taking leave of his niece and his graceless godson, with the stately and elaborate courtesy of the time.

"I hope this meeting will not be our last, M. l'Abbé ?" said the young musician.

"Your courtesy bestows on me a title to which I have no claim," the priest answered smiling ; "I am no abbé, only the officiating deacon of the Church of St. André des Arts."

Gerard knew what this meant. The officiating deacons were the pariahs of the church, and their lot the portion and the punishment of those who offended their ecclesiastical superiors. It was a lot that involved hopeless obscurity, poverty, even semi-starvation. He said, "You may expect better times soon, monsieur. The last hour of the Jesuits has struck. Their day is over now, and those who have suffered from their envy or their malice may look for compensation."

"I look for nothing from man," the priest answered. "I expect no change save one, and that cannot be far distant now—from the outer court of my Lord's Temple to the Holy of Holies. Adieu, mon cher monsieur." They bowed like courteous Frenchmen, then shook hands like old friends.

As they were about to part, the priest turned back and said very earnestly, "Once more let Vauvenargues speak to you, monsieur. These words are his : 'All the intrepidity of a dying unbeliever cannot secure him against trouble of heart, if he reasons thus : "I have been deceived a thousand times upon my palpable interests, I may be deceived about religion. But I have no longer the time or the strength to investigate, and *I die!*"'"

## CHAPTER VII.

### A SUCCESSFUL DAY.

“The rank is but the guinea stamp,  
The man’s the gowd for a’ that.”

“WHO is that knocking at the door? Cannot a man be left in peace even in his bed at midnight?” The voice was that of Jules Prosper; the time Monday night; the place an “appartement garni,” yet more comfortable than that of Gerard.

“What! in bed already? Are you ill, friend?” said Gerard’s cheerful voice.

“Oh, is it you? Let yourself in then; you know how.”

Gerard obeyed. “There’s flint and steel on the table. Light the lamp, if you like,” said Prosper.

With some trouble Gerard did so, and the light fell on his own handsome figure, set off to great advantage by a coat of fine dark cloth, trimmed with gold lace. That coat was the occasion of his visit. “I have come to return your loan, with thanks,” he said.

“You might have waited; I don’t want my coat at midnight. However, since you are here, take a chair, if you can find one. I am glad to see you.”

“Do you rise with the sun, that you go to bed with the lark, Prosper?”

“No; but the night is wet and dark and cold, and as I was crossing the Rue St. Honoré, on my way home from the Opéra Comique, the plank over the gutter in the middle of the street gave way with me, and I slipped in. Dry

clothes, hot coffee, and a fire not being luxuries for a poor poet—here I am!"

"I wish you had been with me instead."

"So did I last night. How did you enjoy your walk on the Boulevards with the pretty little lace-maker?"

"*Lace-maker?*" Gerard repeated, flushing hotly.

"I presume Mademoiselle understands her mother's business, and will one day succeed to it. No bad fortune either."

"Oh!" said Gerard, with evident annoyance. "Then you allude to Mademoiselle Bairdon? You entirely mistake the young lady's position. Madame Bairdon is only her step-mother. Her father is noble—a Scottish Jacobite, exiled for his politics. But enough of this," he added, recovering himself, and purposely dismissing the subject. "I have a great deal to tell you. To-day I waited by appointment on M. le Comte de Caylus."

"How did you find him?"

"Kind and gracious, though a very pompous gentleman, evidently more anxious to *seem* than to *be*. He lectured me upon the advantages of simplicity in architecture and all the other arts, including my own (of which he knows nothing), until I began to think the simplicity was mine in having hoped anything from him, and to fear he had forgotten his promise to introduce me to Madame Geoffrin."

"And had he?"

"If he had, I managed to remind him by a flattering hint, which was well received."

"So you are learning to flatter at last. I begin to have hopes of you."

"I should like men to say of me as they do of M. Duclos, 'Droit et adroit.' But not the last without the first, Prosper. M. de Caylus invited me to accompany him to the hotel of Madame Geoffrin, and presented me to that lady. We were in time for her levée. She received me very graciously, talked to me of my plans and prospects with genuine kindness, and invited me to dinner."

"Pretty well for a beginning."

"There's more to come," said Gerard. "The room was full. Near the couch of Madame sat a gentleman, evidently a foreigner, with whom I thought at first nature had dealt rather hardly. I have seldom seen plainer features, but by way of compensation every detail of his dress betrayed exquisite care and finish. His red heels marked the nobility of the wearer, and I suspect there was rouge on his cheeks as well. When I first noticed him, he was conversing with a tall, coarse-looking man, whose massive head, enormous neck, and round shoulders——"

"That was Diderot!" Prosper interrupted with interest and enthusiasm.

"Even so. I had the honour of looking on and speaking to that prince of the philosophers, that guiding spirit of the Encyclopædia. Madame Geoffrin had turned from me to address some new-comer, no doubt of higher rank and pretensions than I. Thus I was left free to gaze around the room, so simple in its appointments, yet so exquisitely luxurious. Every sense was gratified. There were rare perfumes, fair colours, cushions of down, a thousand costly elegancies of which I scarce could surmise the use.

"Somehow, my heart sank. What right had I to be there? I, without title, fame, or riches. I, the son of— An old proverb, learned I know not where, about a bird wandering from its nest and a man from his place, began to haunt me. Suddenly I heard the owner of the 'talons rouges' say to his companion, 'Call it simply, "The Gambler—a Tragedy," because it *is* the gambler, a tragedy. What is the meaning of that stupid expression, "*Bourgeois Tragedy?*" Is it intended to intimate that the feelings of the bourgeoisie are different from those of other people, and that what would be a comedy to their betters is a tragedy to them? All that kind of insolence is perfectly insufferable.' More followed, but that was enough for me. I remembered I was not bourgeois, roturier, non-noble—but *man*. The king on his throne cannot be more, what-

ever less he may be. And I thought I had to do with men and women who recognise that truth, as the world shall recognise it ere long. The Baron de Grimm (I soon learned his name) passed from the discussion of ‘The Gambler’ to that of a pastoral called ‘Daphnis and Alcinodore,’ written in the dialect of Languedoc. He had it with him, and showed it to M. Diderot; they began to examine it, but the dialect perplexed them; and while I hesitated about offering my assistance, Madame Geoffrin with ready tact introduced me, saying I was a native of the South, and perhaps might be able to interpret. Nothing was easier, as I used the patois myself in childhood. They seemed pleased with my translations, especially M. le Baron, who asked me many questions afterwards. This was a golden opportunity of making known my views to the most distinguished patron of Italian music in France. I suspect we shall suit each other, for he seems to want a protégé, and certainly I want a patron. He has offered me a seat in his box at the Opéra Française—in ‘the Queen’s corner,’ the great rendezvous of all friends and favourers of the music of Italy.”

“ You seem to have made your fortune to-day,” said Prosper, half pleased, half envious.

“ The day was not over then,” Gerard continued. “ M. le Baron took his leave of Madame Geoffrin, kindly hinting that I might accompany him. As we walked together, he was good enough to give me some valuable advice. What he said of music I pass over, though it was full of sense and knowledge of the world; but he congratulated me on having, as he was pleased to say, made such a favourable impression upon Madame Geoffrin. ‘ She is an invaluable friend for a young artist,’ said he; ‘ but if you wish to retain her friendship, you must remember two things. First, she expects, and with reason, a good deal of submission and deference. And next, those who wish to stand well with her must respect all that is respectable. On this account there are free spirits, ‘ friends of joy,’ who

feel themselves more at ease in other houses than in hers, but the loss is their own."

"Of course, you were charmed at the last hint," laughed Prosper. "I can bear witness that no young lady, fresh from a convent boarding-school, was ever more timidly precise than Claude Gerard, the musician."

Gerard bit his lip. "My way of life suits me," he said proudly; "and I see not why it should offend you, or any man. If I *have* succeeded in gaining the suffrage of Madame Geoffrin, wherein have I hurt you? And I may help you. You know well, Prosper, that if I can——"

"Yes, yes, I know all that. You are a good child, though perhaps a little wanting in courage. All the better for Madame Geoffrin. Whom did you meet at dinner?"

"A choice company of artists, with a few of their most distinguished patrons. The Comte de Caylus, of course, Vanloo, Vernet, Boucher——"

"The Raphael of our days! Gerard, I envy you more and more."

"Raphael!" cried Gerard with supreme contempt. "Have you ever seen a painting of Raphael's?"

"No; but the Venus of Boucher——"

"Is not the Madonna of Raphael," said Gerard, as the face of Griselle rose before him. "At dinner, Boucher hazarded one of those coarse jests which some of our philosophers are apt to mistake for arguments against the Catholic faith. You should have heard Madame Geoffrin's low and quiet 'Voilà qui est bien,' and seen its instant effect. It was the signal of a queen to her subjects, as gentle and as peremptory. 'Thus we are held, as by an invisible thread,' said my neighbour, one M. Marmontel, an habitué of the house, the only man of letters admitted to the artists' dinner. Very charming he was, drawing us all out upon our favourite topics; and as he had himself no artist vanity to feed, no position to maintain, he was like the quiet neutral shade, which claims nothing for itself, but throws out into fine relief every colour placed beside it.

At first he was reserved with me, because, as I afterwards guessed, I had been introduced by M. de Caylus, whom he does not like. But the ice soon thawed ; and I think I am partly indebted to him for the honour of an invitation for Wednesday ; for Madame Geoffrin receives the men of letters on that day, as she does the artists on Monday. M. Marmontel hinted that I am more likely to find amusing companions and useful friends amongst the men of letters than amongst the artists."

" If true, at least scarce courteous, as addressed to you."

" Very courteously said, however. He comes from the mountains of Auvergne, and remembers a happy, virtuous, humble home,"

" The less a man remembers the better," said Prosper. " Nature has given us eyes before, not behind us. Gerard, my friend, you will need my coat a little longer ; and you can keep it, if you will. Your new patroness is one who will respect you for appearing twice at her table in the same suit, when she knows you cannot afford another."

" Thank you," said Gerard. " And I am sure you are right, Prosper."

" If he should ruin my coat as he ruined his own," Prosper thought, " there is no great harm done. Gold lace is quite passé ; people are taking it to pieces for the bullion. And I shall have established a claim upon his gratitude."

" Have you any more adventures to tell ?" he asked aloud.

" No—yes ;—I forgot. Yesterday I had a long argument with a priest, a relative of Madame Bairdon's."

" What a loss of time ! I pity you."

" No occasion for pity. I gave him my mind about the Holy Catholic Church. Not my whole mind—not all I know, or the worst—but enough to prove that 'the ark of God,' as they call it, is a foul and hideous galley, crammed with guilt and misery, and resounding with curses and blows and shrieks of pain. If the crazy old craft does not

go down of itself, may the Philosophers give it a well-aimed shot or two, and sink it beneath the waters of oblivion, in mercy to Humanity! From the depths of my heart I echo Voltaire's cry, 'Ecrasez l'infâme!'"

"Say that to Madame Goudin, if you dare. What said your priest in answer?"

"Left the Catholic Church to her fate, and boldly assumed the offensive. He said I needed religion, that I could not live, above all that I could not die, without it."

"Oh, yes!" scoffed Prosper. "The old, worn-out platitudes! Since the priests can no longer burn us in this world, they kindly tell us we shall be burned in the next if we disobey them. The old taunts too! 'Wait till you are ill, M. le Philosophe, and you will be quick enough in sending for the sacraments.' Or, again, 'You are destroying public morality. When your valet steals your purse, he will tell you he too is a philosopher, and the Ten Commandments are exploded.'"

"Wish I had a purse and a valet to steal it!" said Gerard. "But these were not M. Goudin's arguments. His was an appeal, not to my *selfishness*, but to *myself*—my whole nature. It was this, 'Your body needs food, without it, you perish. You take food, you live and are strengthened by it. So your whole man—heart, soul, mind—needs religion. Take, accept, live by it; and the life it sustains proves it true. Bread that nourishes is good bread.'"

"My dear friend, I am dying with sleep. Good night to you."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### VOGUE LA GALÈRE.

“ The boatie rows, the boatie rows,  
The boatie rows full weel.”

GERARD'S barque was now launched prosperously upon a smiling sea ; its fair white sails filled by a favouring breeze.

He had all the qualities calculated to ensure success in the brilliant society to which Madame Geoffrin's favour admitted him. With the air of a handsome young shepherd, fresh from the Arcadia of which it was the fashion to dream, he had the manners of a Parisian. He was modest, but not shy ; and his conversation, always full of intelligent simplicity, soon acquired the piquant grace, the fine and perfumed pleasantry of the salons. As he happened to be the only musician whom Madame Geoffrin received, he was no man's rival ; and could praise a sketch of Vernet's, a tale of Marmontel's, a poem of Marivaux', without reserve or jealousy.

Madame Geoffrin could not have had a more delightful protégé. He was young enough to be submissive without servility, and docile without the sacrifice of manly independence ; while his inexperience made advice, and even dictation, really advantageous to him. Madame Geoffrin hated nothing so much as having to defend her friends. She never had to defend Désiré Gerard. From taste, not from principle, he retained, even amidst the dissipations of

Paris, a simplicity and purity that might have exposed him to ridicule in freer circles. Moreover, he never startled the salon with bewildering paradoxes, or wild theories subversive of the first principles of morality and religion. The admiration and gratitude with which he regarded his patroness were profound, and their expression, at once delicate and ingenuous, was more flattering than most of the other tributes she received as Queen of Fashion.

The friendship of the Baron de Grimm also proved invaluable to Gerard. With his help a few "chansons," mere trifles composed long ago, were soon exchanged for a little pile of bright louis-d'or. Marivaux entrusted him with the libretto of an opera; even the renowned Diderot employed him to correct some errors in the article on music destined to appear in the *Encyclopædia*; and a signal honour he esteemed it to be associated, however humbly, with the master-work of the age, "the great confused Bible of the Eighteenth Century," at that time all the more an object of general interest and enthusiasm because unwisely suppressed by authority.

Grimm introduced him to his friend the Baron d'Holbach, and he was as successful in pleasing that wealthy nobleman as in gaining the regard of Madame Geoffrin. Before long he became a frequent guest at his famous suppers; in fact, almost a member of what was called the "clique Holbachique." This circle comprised the most "advanced thinkers" of the time, such as Raynal, Helvetius, Diderot, and D'Holbach himself, whose "System of Nature" provoked the indignation even of Voltaire, and has been truly called "a crime of lèse-humanity." The very qualities that made Gerard so pleasant and so popular, left him peculiarly exposed to influences of every kind and from every quarter.

No increase of prosperity tempted him to forsake his humble lodging in the Rue Béthizy. No more brilliant engagement kept him from the Sunday dinner of the Bairdons, or superseded the evening walk with them on the

Boulevards. What was more remarkable, he sometimes escorted Madame Bairdon and Griselle to early mass at St. Sulpice on Sundays and holidays.

He did not meet M. Goudin again. The old priest lodged amongst the *rôtisseurs* of the Quais, in a poor district of the Quartier St. André. Small-pox, that curse of the age, was raging there, and his unceasing ministrations to the sick entailed upon him the self-denial of a total separation from the Bairdons. Not until the plague was stayed did he even venture to call at the shop and make inquiries for the family, especially for the little children, who were very dear to him.

Gustave recovered in due time from his injury, though a slight lameness remained, and the puny boy looked more weak and ailing than ever. But his mind developed rapidly, and in very undue proportion to his growth of body. He could not be accused of ingratitude to Gerard, for whom he eagerly performed every little service in his power, listening to his words with a veneration very like that which Gerard himself paid to those of D'Alembert, Diderot, or D'Holbach. He even attempted the study of music (though nature had denied him the necessary gifts), that he might appreciate the achievements of his hero. Gerard, flattered by this deference, often talked with the boy, giving him the benefit of his "advanced ideas," and lending him the writings of his philosophic friends.

One morning Griselle rose early to prepare breakfast for her father, who was going to visit some friends at St. Cloud, and, to her surprise, found Gustave already in the parlour, reading.

"Good morning, brother," she said. "How early you are to-day!"

"M. Gerard woke me," returned Gustave. "He went out an hour ago."

"Indeed! What are you reading?"

"Oh! a book *you* could not understand," said Gustave loftily — "L'Esprit," by M. Helvetius."

"Don't you think you could explain it to me if you tried?" Griselle asked good-humouredly.

"Perhaps—M. Gerard could if he were here. The other night, when he was telling us about that English book of Adam Smith's, I think even *you* understood him."

"That was easy. It was only about buying and selling, demand and supply. That goes through everything, even your mother's lace."

"So it does," said Gustave brightening. "Now, for instance, if I had that lace in England, where no one makes it, and many want to buy it, it would be worth a king's ransom."

"Yes; but you would have to pay heavy customs and duties."

"That's so like a girl," said Gustave, with a gesture of impatience. "Girls never understand an illustration. A man cannot talk of the mountains of the moon but they think he is setting out to climb them. Besides, those duties and customs are absurd and oppressive, fruits of the selfishness of kings and the folly of subjects. But, Griselle, this is a wonderful book of M. Helvetius'. He proves, most unanswerably, that every one does everything just because he likes it, and for no other possible reason. There is nothing but selfishness in the world."

"What a horrible lie!" said Griselle.

"Girls' ignorance again! If you were able to think and reason—like a man—you would see it is no lie, but the truth. The other day M. Gerard repeated to me a bon-mot he heard somewhere about Helvetius, 'This man has told the secret of all the world.'"

"It is false, I say," Griselle repeated, her blue eyes kindling and her cheek glowing. "We are not all selfish; we *do* care for each other, and the good God above cares for us all."

"Old wives' nonsense!" cried Gustave with bitter contempt. "How can I believe there is a God that cares for me? Here am I, Gustave Adolphe Bairdon, fifteen years

old, with ‘esprit’ more than enough—esprit which is worse than useless, only a burden and a pain, because I have not a body to match. I am like a knife-blade, keen and sharp, but without a handle. Of course, if I had belonged to the noblesse I would have been made bishop or abbé to begin with, and then I could have kept my place with the best ; ay, and made a name too in the world of letters and science. But my father is nobody—in this country—and my mother sells lace. Advocate I might have been, and wished to be ; but, Griselle, the lads in the college laugh at me and call me harlequin, dwarf, hunchback, and if I stood up to speak in court the public would laugh too. And then —was it not enough to be ugly, deformed, sickly, without being lame too ? Was the good God caring for me when I fell under the horse’s hoofs last June ? ”

“ He was, brother ; or M. Gerard would not have been at hand to save you,” Griselle answered softly.

“ Save me !—for what ? ” he exclaimed bitterly.

“ For a brave and noble life, my brother.”

Gustave had risen to his feet, and they stood together near the window. Griselle laid her hand gently on his forehead, pushing back the soft fine hair which fell over it. “ Do not slander yourself, and reproach your Maker,” she said. “ Gustave, the face I look on now is not ‘ugly.’ There is in it that which would be beautiful if you would let it shine forth as God means it to do. Your deformity is so slight, brother, that a little care in dress almost hides it ; and you may yet outgrow it, and your feeble health too. God has given you precious gifts—keen thought, ready wit, an eloquent tongue ; only do not feed your brain while you starve your heart, Gustave, or else you may be an advocate, or even a philosopher, but you will never be a *man*.”

“ Good morning, mademoiselle,” said Gerard entering, and bringing with him into the city room a breath of spring and a beam of sunshine. “ I am not worthy to wish you joy upon this auspicious morning, so I have ventured to make these flowers, whose pure loveliness resembles,

though it cannot rival, yours, my ambassadors and interpreters." He presented a bouquet, carefully chosen from amongst the choicest treasures of the Marché des Innocents.

"It is her fête!" thought Gustave in great vexation. "And I, who told him of it a month ago, forgot it myself! How unkind she must think me!" With a blundering desire to make some little reparation, he went to fetch water for the flowers. "Is it *very* necessary to hasten back with it?" he asked himself, as he stood in the dark narrow passage, vase in hand, and caught, through the open door, a glimpse of Gerard's graceful figure and bright handsome face, glowing with emotion. How eager, how happy he looked! Perhaps, after all, there were things in the world worth considering beside theories, thoughts, and philosophies.

That step on the stairs was his father's. Gustave hurried down into the shop to avoid him, for the father and son were not then on the most friendly terms. But he heard greetings exchanged, and words of congratulation and of thanks, from which he inferred that M. Bairdon, as well as Gerard, had remembered Griselle's birthday.

An hour later, Griselle, in the quiet of her chamber, untied the silken thread which bound the lilies, roses, and camellias Gerard had selected for her. Had some child-fairy been at sport amongst them, and left his plaything, a tiny hoop of glistening gold, garnished with one drop of liquid light? A perfumed billet, tinted like a rose-leaf, and scarcely larger, explained the mystery: "Deign, mademoiselle, to accept one flower which will not fade, as a messenger of sentiments yet more unfading."

## CHAPTER IX.

“A SCORNER SEEKETH WISDOM, AND FINDETH IT NOT.”

“I had rather be a *priest* than do so base a thing.”

*Old Provençal Proverb.*

“HERE, Griselle,” said M. Bairdon one evening, as he returned rather earlier than usual from the Café des Étrangers, “here is to-day’s *Mercure*.”

Griselle took the paper (always interesting to the household because edited by Gerard’s friend, Marmontel), and was soon arrested by an ode on the devotion of D’Assas. “M. Prosper’s poem, which M. Gerard read to us the other night,” she thought. “No doubt he has persuaded M. Marmontel to print it. So like him—always generous and helpful.”

Bairdon, meanwhile, was busy studying a handbill which set forth the times and places of the starting of diligences ; when Gustave, who sat in the room reading as usual, looked up suddenly and addressed him.

“Monsieur,” he said, “I wish, if you have no objection, to become a priest.”

“A *priest*!” Bairdon repeated, in his amazement allowing the paper to fall from his hand. “What is the meaning of this whim? I thought you were a philosopher, and prided yourself on your freedom from vulgar prejudices, and so forth. Are you mocking me?”

“Not at all, monsieur. I should not presume so far. I wish to enter the Church.” Gustave’s tone was perfectly

cool and polite, almost condescending. Truly was it said of that age, "Respect is no more."

"What is the meaning of all this? Have you gone to hear one of M. Bridaine's wonderful sermons, and been *converted*, as the phrase runs? That were good news indeed. Only with you no conversion would last a month," said Bairdon contemptuously.

"My present purpose will last long enough, as you shall see, monsieur."

"But why become a *priest*?" Bairdon asked with scornful emphasis upon the word. He reverenced the Catholic Church more sincerely than most of his contemporaries, but he neither respected nor liked the Catholic priesthood.

"Why do you go into the next room when you see breakfast laid there? I see cakes and *café au lait*—ay, and dessert and wine too, laid for me upon the abundant tables of Holy Church."

"Oh! that is the reason, is it? Then, of course, you have learned to believe the dogmas of Holy Church?"

"Oh yes;—quite as devoutly as any of her servants, higher in education and position than a village curé, or perhaps, than my honest godfather the officiating deacon."

"You are an impudent boy!" said Bairdon angrily. "But end this folly, and say in plain words what has put the Church into your head."

"I have been thinking for some time that I ought to look to my future, and make choice of a profession; and now, indeed, I *must*. Have you not heard that there is an 'Édit du Roi' out to-day closing the doors of the College of Louis le Grand? Those poor wretches of Jesuits have succeeded at last, by dint of cleverness and good management, in making France too hot for them, and may be considered fairly 'hors de combat.' That does not matter to me. I have learned all *they* can teach me—with a good deal more that they will never know."

"True knowledge is humble, childish ignorance proud and boastful," said Bairdon, severely.

"About a fortnight ago," Gustave continued, not heeding the rebuke, "I addressed some very neat congratulatory verses, in Latin, to M. le Cardinal Bernis."

"What!—to *Bernis!*!" Bairdon in his indignation almost started from his seat.

Gustave, though rather taken by surprise, went on coolly, "He received them with all favour, sent me a message inviting me to wait upon him, and offered, if I would enter the Church, to procure me a fat benefice."

"Wait upon *Bernis!*!" cried the angry Scotchman. "That vile, cringing sycophant! That favourite of King's favourites—more shameless, more abandoned than they! That wretch, creeping into power by back-stairs and ladies' antechambers, and covering the rags of his infamy with the purple of God's Church! A son of mine—a Bairdon of Glenmair—approaching him with lying flatteries, crouching at his feet and saying, 'Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread!' Never—never, Gustave!"

The *Mercure* was laid down long ago; and Griselle, pale and anxious, looked from father to son.

"If I want to climb, I must step on whatever happens to lie in my way," Gustave said, doggedly.

"No Bairdon shall step in the mire while God's law and man's give me power to prevent it," Bairdon answered. He continued, a little more mildly, "If your philosophies and fine-spun absurdities have left you any conscience at all, just ask yourself what you mean."

"I mean to grow rich," said the unabashed Gustave.

"By asking an abandoned profligate to have you well paid for teaching—or pretending to teach—doctrines you do not believe, and administering sacraments you think no better than juggling tricks!"

"Granted," Gustave answered quietly; "I am no worse than cardinals, archbishops, bishops, abbés, priors. Which

of them all believes that God is in their hands when they consecrate the host, or in the sky above them when they say their prayers?"

"Hold thy peace, boy! Not another word either of Bernis or of the priesthood, or else——"

"Or else, what?" Gustave asked, coolly still, though he grew rather pale.

Bairdon's brow darkened ominously. "In my country," he began, with an expressive glance at his gold-headed cane; but, arrested by the pleading look in Griselle's soft blue eyes, he paused, then resumed more gently—"in my country men knew how to rule and discipline their own households in the fear of God. Here, it seems, it is the fashion to buy a *lettre de cachet*, and send a disobedient son or a froward page—to St. Lazare."

The threat was terrible. From the thought of a retreat at St. Lazare, under the control of monks whose ideas of discipline were said to be at once cruel and degrading, even Gustave shrank appalled. But presently recovering himself, he muttered between his set teeth, "You shall never send me to St. Lazare."

"I hope I need not," said Bairdon, leaving the room.

Gustave sat still, moving neither hand nor foot. So did Griselle. At last she said softly, "Brother." He did not seem to hear. She rose and laid her hand gently on his arm, but he shook it rudely off. Then, as if repenting, he said, "Never mind, Griselle. I know how to help myself."

"If you do right, God will help you. Take heart, brother! You will be a famous advocate one day, perhaps a judge, or a President of the Parliament, maintaining its ancient privileges against the king himself, with all the world looking on."

Gustave's hard, set face softened. "You have faith in me," he said.

"Why not, brother? But, oh! if you only had faith in the good God!"

The appeal was not well-timed. Gustave was irritated,

and revenged himself by a taunt that crimsoned Griselle's fair cheek and brow. "Why don't you distress yourself about M. Gerard?" he asked. "He believes as little as I." Then, after a pause, and with bitterness, "I suppose you think faith is only good for women and children."

Without waiting for Griselle's answer he went out, taking the *Mercure* in his hand.

"Griselle," said Madame Bairdon, as they sat working together after supper, "I am distressed about my poor Gustave. Thy father is somewhat hard on him. He forgets that he is still a child, though so learned and clever, and all the more a child in some things because he is quite a prodigy in others."

"My father's love for all that is true, honest, and good is so strong, that he finds it hard to bear with evil," Griselle said with pride.

"Ah, well! one must take things as they come in this world," said Madame Bairdon with a sigh. She had no wish to imitate her husband's severer virtue, but she admired it, and enjoyed the dignity it reflected upon her. "Griselle, ma fille," she resumed, "I am distressed no less for thy father himself. I have many an anxious thought about him, though one must needs be cautious in speaking these days."

Griselle's colour changed, and she asked, in a trembling voice, "What can you mean, madame?"

"Nothing particular; nothing to put in plain words, perhaps. But have you not observed a change in him of late?"

"Yes, indeed," said Griselle, brightening, "I have seen a change in him, but to me it seems a happy one. He is more cheerful, more buoyant, more full of energy than I ever remember him."

"The old story!" Madame Bairdon sighed, as her needle flashed rapidly through the lace she was mending. "The old story, child! Everything looks bright to thee, ma fille, so long as M. Gerard is in and out, with his pleasant talk

and cheerful ways for all, and his soft words for *one*. I do not blame thee—not I. Thy father loves him well, and so do I. I own I could have wished he was something besides a musician. These artists are apt to be dreamy and fitful ; one can't depend upon them. But no doubt M. Gerard's fine friends will get him a place, and then all will be right. However, let us return to thy father, Griselle. Certainly he is more cheerful than he used to be; but this cheerfulness, whence comes it? He haunts the Café des Étrangers more than ever, and I only half like the acquaintances he meets there. I fear more letters pass between some of those Scotch and English gentlemen and their friends on the other side of the Channel—Jacobites, as they call them—than Government would exactly approve. People ought to be cautious what they send through the post, considering the postmaster's habit of rifling the mails, and carrying their contents to Versailles for the King's amusement. I confess I think that somewhat hard, Griselle. Suppose Gustave is obliged to make a retreat at St. Lazare, and I write and tell my cousins at Dijon, is that any reason our little troubles must be laughed at over the royal chocolate in the ‘petits appartements?’—But, hush! Here comes M. Gerard.”

Gerard came in gaily, with a cheerful face and elastic step.

“Monsieur always looks as if he had just heard good news,” said Madame Bairdon.

“So I have, madame, on this occasion,” Gerard answered, with a glance at Griselle. “Not that the rose is without a thorn, however. You know M. Pelletier, the wealthy farmer-general?”

“I sold madame the lace for her trousseau,” said Madame Bairdon. “A better bargain she had in it than he has in her.”

“No doubt,” said Gerard. “It was M. de Choiseul who forced him to marry her, or lose his place. Where will end that vexatious interference of Government in every-

body's private affairs? But whatever M. Pelletier's domestic troubles may be, his wealth is boundless, and so is his munificence. He has planned some fêtes, or spectacles, to be given at his mansion in the Place de Louis le Grand, and he intends them to eclipse everything of the kind hitherto offered to our fastidious Parisians. He has asked me to become his guest, and to superintend the musical department. And so—" He ended with a sigh.

"And so, M. Gerard, your fortune is made," Madame Bairdon said cheerfully.

But Gerard was not looking at *her*. "And so," he resumed, a little sadly, "I shall be obliged to change my quarters—for a time. I do not say with what reluctance."

"The house will be quite desolate without you, M. Gerard," Madame Bairdon answered warmly. "But in losing the good lodger, I presume to hope we shall not lose the valued friend."

"Madame, the friend is yours as ever, and for ever," said Gerard, kissing her hand with graceful courtesy.

"Will monsieur do us the honour to sup with us this evening?" she asked.

"Most willingly and gratefully. I shall be glad of the opportunity of paying my respects to M. Bairdon."

The evening was a pleasant and not quite an uneventful one. Since the day of Griselle's fête Gerard's position towards her had been understood by all, but he took this opportunity of making the formal appeal to her father that custom demanded; and Bairdon, while counselling prudence and patience, did not withhold his approbation.

Griselle sat long at her chamber window that night. "How hot it is!" she murmured. "The air feels heavy, weighted with something that is coming. Perhaps thunder is at hand." So much was spoken half aloud, but there was an under-current of silent thought. "We have been so happy together! It was too good to last. God knows whether M. Pelletier's gold is cleaner than M. Bernis's

patronage. This is got by flattering princes—that, I fear, by starving peasants. Can a blessing come with either? How restless every one seems! My father, Gustave, and now—Désiré. Is something strange indeed going to happen, or is it but my own foolish fancy?"

## CHAPTER X.

### MAKING HASTE TO BE RICH.

"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

IT was early morning in the soft, bright midsummer, when evening and morning almost touch each other's hands. In Madame Bairdon's house every one was awake, except the children ; for M. Bairdon was leaving his home on some mysterious adventurous mission, far better understood by his daughter than by his wife, yet dimly comprehended even by her. Griselle surmised that the Scotch and English adherents of the Chevalier de St. George were taking advantage of the war with England to set on foot some scheme for his benefit ; and that they had engaged her father to open a communication with friends of the cause in Italy, and to secure their co-operation. And she knew that whatever else this commission might be, it could not fail to be hazardous.

Yet she was glad that he was going. With vivid apprehensions for his safety mingled a secret thrill of pride and exultation at the "large excitement" of the scenes in which he was about to take part. For an unacknowledged sense that he drooped and pined amidst the comforts and luxuries of his aimless, inactive life, and carried a chafed and restless heart to the Boulevards and the cafés, had long haunted and troubled her. Her love for him was intense ; but it was the love that rejoices in the joy of its object, even in spite of its own pain and loss.

On Gustave's account also Griselle was glad that her father

would be absent for a time. The distance between the son and father widened every day. Gustave, in very waywardness, often threw out in his father's presence some of the paradoxes of his favourite philosophers ; and Bairdon, who would have listened to the same things from the lips of Gerard with indulgence and courtesy, though not without remonstrance, treated them as wilful blasphemies when propounded by Gustave, and replied by threats of condign punishment. These Gustave did not fail to repay with polite sarcasm and covered insolence ; while Madame Bairdon's unwise interference only exasperated both parties.

But the morning of his father's departure found Gustave apparently in one of his better moods. He waited dutifully upon M. Bairdon, and accompanied him to the diligence through the forlorn and silent streets, where the dismal lanterns flared unheeded in the summer morning light. As he returned alone, however, he made a long détour that he might visit the Place de Louis le Grand, where was the stately mansion of M. Pelletier.

To his surprise and disappointment he found it unoccupied. The millionaire had gone to his magnificent country house on the banks of the Seine, and had taken M. Gerard with him. Gustave might have known this, had not his too frequent custom of absenting himself from home during the evenings caused him to miss Gerard's late farewell visit to the Rue Béthizy.

He walked slowly home, thinking of Gerard, and communing with himself much more earnestly than was his wont. "What would *he* say if I could tell him all ? Would he blame me ? I think *not*. He too wants to be rich, that he may marry Griselle. While I want—oh, a hundred, a thousand things ! life, joy, power ; all that is bright to the eye, sweet to the taste, soft to the touch, all that M. Peltier has in his gilded halls. Money buys all. I know how to get money because I have esprit,—*I think*. Fools bid high for what they fancy ; wise men bring it to them, and reap the profit. Why not Gustave Adolphe Bairdon, as

well as any one else? The Jesuit fathers say the end sanctifies the means. But would M. Gerard say so? Would my mother?"

Here the boy's heart thrilled with a sharp unaccustomed pang. For him right and wrong had absolutely no existence. The old question of sin—old as the first dawn of intelligent life on the globe,—he flung aside contemptuously. What was sin, if not committed against some one? What were right and wrong if no standard existed? No law to which he owned allegiance hindered his putting forth his hand and taking the thing that was not his.

Only human praise and blame remained, as powers that might control his actions. Suppose his mother blamed him, and with tears of bitter anguish? Could he bear *that*? He remembered her indignant sorrow years ago, when an apprentice, an orphan whom she had befriended, appropriated some lace entrusted to her. He recalled her words, as if spoken yesterday. "It is not the loss, mon ami, but the thought that Alexandrine could deceive me thus."

Very leisurely he pursued his way; noticing nothing that he saw; and forgetting to exchange a jest with the watchman who came to extinguish the useless lanterns, or to ask him when M. de Sartines was going to afford them the new reverberes of which they heard so much. And few things could have marked his pre-occupation more strongly; for seldom did he, or those like him, lose an opportunity of assailing, with taunt and sarcasm, even the humblest servant of the officious and unpopular lieutenant of police.

But, just as he was about to turn from the Rue des Arbres Secs into the Rue Béthizy, a sudden light flashed over his clouded face, giving it the look Griselle loved to see there. "I have it," he said aloud, and walked home more briskly.

Gustave's misfortune now was not so much that he was old beyond his years as that he was so very young. His nature, which on one side had grown out of all proportion, remained on the other unformed and childish. He saw

far, but only in a direct line. He expected the problems of life to be as simple in their elements as the problems of Euclid. He could not take in contingencies, or make allowance for possible, even probable accidents. He looked before him, but not around—still less *above*.

A fortnight passed by uneventfully. Then one day Gustave was missing. His mother and sister had him sought for in all his haunts as far as they knew them; but they were sorrowfully aware that he had haunts and companions they could not reach. So they waited; their alarm at first not great, and ready any moment to change into righteous anger at the re-appearance of the culprit. "He cannot go far, or do much harm," Griselle pleaded, "with only a five-franc piece in his pocket, and I know he has no more."

"True enough; want of money will bring him back," said Madame Bairdon, reasoning down her own apprehensions as she would have done those of another. "Perhaps he has only gone by the water-coach to see M. Gerard. Just like him, to slip away thus, and give us all a fright."

Two days more, and Gustave did not return. On the morning of the third day, Madame Bairdon came up from the shop to the parlour, where Griselle sat teaching the children; her face was white as marble, and a drawer half filled with lace was in her hand.

"You may run and play now, my little ones," said Griselle. "What is it, maman?"

Madame Bairdon stood silent, trembling from head to foot. At length she glanced at the half-open door; Griselle rose and shut it. "Look," said Madame Bairdon in a frightened whisper. "Last Saturday I filled this drawer with the choicest Valenciennes. I never touched or opened it till now, when M. le Marquis de Bertine sends his valet in haste for new ruffles to match his *jabot*; and see, it is half empty!" Madame Bairdon sank into a chair, covered her face with her hands, and groaned aloud.

The utter distress of her brave, brisk, self-possessed step-

mother touched Griselle's heart. "It is a heavy loss," she began ; "but—" she stopped and hesitated ; the effect upon Madame Bairdon seemed so disproportionate to the cause, as she understood it.

"It is—ruin !" Madame Bairdon murmured. "We shall never lift our heads again. And—it will kill thy father."

"Dear mother, of what are you thinking ? My father would not care though all the lace in France were stolen."

"And his son the thief !" cried Madame Bairdon, removing the hand that shaded her white face. "Why do I live to say it ?"

It was Griselle's turn to grow pale now. "Mother, what can you mean !" she cried in the sharp tones of fear and pain.

"Hush, child—speak low ! See this ; I found it in the drawer." She handed a piece of paper to Griselle, who took it and looked at it eagerly. The words were Latin, but the writing was Gustave's—there was no doubt of that. She tried to speak, but bitter shame and anguish choked her voice.

"I wish he was in his grave," wailed Madame Bairdon, rocking herself to and fro, and wringing her hands—"I wish he had died an innocent babe, like my little Jules and Marie, that are blessed angels in Paradise now ! I wish I had died myself—before I saw this day !" Then, with a sudden and surprising change of manner, "Griselle, some one knocks at the door. If it is to tell me that Madame la Comtesse de Servignan is here about her daughter's trousseau, say I will have the honour of waiting upon her immediately." Madame Bairdon was a brave woman, and this sorrow must be hidden from the world at any cost.

A pretty little apprentice stood at the door. "Pardon, ma'amselle," she said. "M. Goudin is here, inquiring, as usual, after the health of the family. He says the sickness is gone now, and he would be glad to kiss the hand of madame. But he requests me to say that if madame is occupied it does not signify."

Griselle hesitated, and looked at Madame Bairdon. To her surprise she said at once, "Ask him to come in."

A few moments afterwards the priest entered, looking older, greyer, more worn than when they had seen him last. His apparel too, though arranged with scrupulous care and neatness, showed still more evident signs of poverty. Yet even the giddy shop-girls, so unsparing in their ridicule of the trim abbés, who spent large sums on their costly lace, hushed their pert chatter in M. Goudin's presence, and spoke to him and of him with studied respect.

Madame Bairdon rose and came to meet him, stretching out both her hands.

The old priest stood silent, and a quiver passed across his face, as if he repressed some sudden emotion. Had Valérie missed him, then? Was she indeed glad to see him once more? Only One could tell how that lonely heart, during those months of separation, had yearned after the sole kindred ties life had left; but he had not dared to think that they too were caring for him.

There are men and women to whom every one in sorrow turns instinctively, attracted by a subtle yet potent influence. Perhaps the secret of this magnetic power may be the close contact and near abiding of its possessors with Him who is the true lodestone.

Valérie, prosperous and happy, cared little for her poor and unsuccessful kinsman; but Valérie, perplexed and sorrowful, received him gladly, and poured forth to him all her anguish.

"And we gave him the very best education in our power," she concluded. "He has attended the Jesuit College ever since he was nine years old. Plenty of fine prizes, and crowns, and honours, he got, too—for rhetoric, philosophy, everything. I wish, instead, he had learned the Catechism and the Ten Commandments."

Goudin listened in silence. At length he said, "Show me that paper, Valérie."

"It seems to be one of his exercises," said Madame Bairdon, handing it to him. "The miserable boy must have dropped it in his haste, as he rifled the drawer. It makes his shame and ours too certain."

"This is a Latin poem," Goudin said, after looking at the paper. "Very short, and evidently transcribed with care. I cannot imagine what use the poor child intended to make of it."

Madame Bairdon loved him for the tone of pity, the absence of reproach, above all for that word "poor child." But she only said rather sharply, "And what good would it do if you could?"

"Not much; but it might have guided. The first thing we have to do is to find out whither he has gone."

Madame Bairdon looked up in surprise. "To what end, uncle?" she asked in a hopeless tone.

"To seek and to save that which is lost."

She threw up her hands with a quick gesture of despair. "Impossible—a thousand times impossible!" she exclaimed. "His father, the only one who could have attempted it, is gone from us, God only knows whither, or for how long. For me to leave the shop would ruin all, even if I knew where to look for the poor child, or what to do with him if I found him."

"One step at a time," said Goudin. "Had he any patron or literary friend to whom he would be likely to send a Latin poem?"

Griselle looked up quickly, thinking of Bernis; but she did not speak. Madame Bairdon said, "There is M. Gerard, whom you met here last summer. He is in the country with M. Pelletier, the farmer-general."

"These lines were never intended for the eye of M. Gerard," said Goudin with decision. "They are a clever, impudent travesty, under guise of a translation, of a part of some sentimental poem upon the devotion of D'Assas, treating all sacrifice of self for others as an impossible absurdity, in which no one even believes."

"Can they be a college theme, written for the Jesuits?" Madame Bairdon suggested helplessly.

"No, my dear niece. Such sentiments as these would not be acceptable to the community which has given us St. Francis Xavier," said the generous Jansenist. "This throws no light upon our path; but other things may. His late fellow-students, his friends, the houses he frequents."

"We have already sought him everywhere we know of," Madame Bairdon answered. "He was always silent and reserved, making few intimates, so far as we could tell."

"Has he taken any of his books and clothes with him?"

"Only a change of linen. His books and papers are here."

"I should like to examine them. We may find something to guide us."

Griselle left the room, and soon returned with a pile of books, which she laid on the table. "I can find no papers," she said.

The priest looked hastily through the books. The well-known manuals used in all the Jesuit colleges, with a few second-hand plays, and a stray volume of Rabelais, made up Gustave's library. He had never been rich enough to buy any of the writings of his favourite philosophers.

"Shakespeare's Richard III.!" said Goudin at last, in a tone of surprise. "But I forgot—of course Gustave reads English."

"Oh, yes; and speaks it quite as well as French. You know he is half English, or Scotch rather," said Griselle. Suddenly there recurred to her thoughts the morning she and Gustave had discussed Adam Smith and Helvetius together; that bright, happy morning of her fête, when Désiré gave her the flowers, and the ring worn ever since! What vague hint was it that Gustave dropped then about the value of French lace in England? Could it mean anything?—Should she speak of it now, or be silent? At last

she spoke, hurriedly, and as if afraid of the sound of her own voice.

"The value of that lace would be untold in England, and Gustave knows it."

There was an ominous pause; then Madame Bairdon burst into tears. "My boy is dead," she sobbed—"Dead, or worse! In the hands of the police, of the douane. He will be imprisoned, racked, hanged perhaps. Holy Virgin, have mercy on me!"

"Dear Valérie," said Goudin, "trust in God and be calm. Remember we know nothing yet. With the war raging fiercely between us and England, Gustave is little likely to brave all the risks of— But we will make inquiry. My first step must be to find out whether he left Paris by any of the public conveyances. If he did, my next will be"—he paused—"to follow him."

"You cannot mean that," Madame Bairdon exclaimed.

"Did I not answer for him to God in his infancy? How should I hold up my head before Him, if I might have saved him, and forbore?"

"Mother!—uncle!" Griselle said eagerly, "Gustave loves me, talks to me more freely than to any one. I could not have gone alone to seek him, though it was in my heart to do it; but, father, if you will go, then take me with you. I will help to find him, and to bring him back."

"My child," Goudin said tenderly, "you know not what you ask."

"Only one thing I know," Griselle pleaded: "Gustave will listen to me—will come with me. Mother, dear mother, speak—tell M. Goudin I may go."

Madame Bairdon's trembling lips unclosed, but no words came. At last a fresh burst of tears relieved her heart, not so much at the moment aching for her lost son, as surprised and softened by the tender sympathy given her. "Dear uncle!—dear child!"—she faltered, "I can but say, God go with and reward you."

"God stay with thee, Valérie, and comfort thee," Goudin

answered. "Now I go to my work. If I can, I shall return to-night with tidings."

It was Madame Bairdon's turn now to kiss the hand of the old priest; a slight action truly, but indicating a great change.

Late in the evening Goudin returned, not unsuccessful. Long years of unwearied labour amongst the struggling and suffering poor of the great city had given him the means of tracing the fugitive. He knew the drivers and conductors of public vehicles, their families, their helpers, and through some of these he obtained the information he sought.

At early dawn next morning a chaise à poste containing an old ecclesiastic and a young lady drove rapidly through the Porte Saint-Denis and took the road leading to Pont-oise.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A WANDERER FOUND.

"The way of transgressors is hard."

OLD France was not a country very easy to lose oneself in. Law was everywhere: it was difficult to move at all from the beaten track without encountering some of its myrmidons, with the continually repeated watch-word on their lips, "Il est defendu."

Yet Gustave had succeeded in losing himself, and so effectually, that it cost Goudin and Griselle many days of anxious search to find him. But at length they traced him to a solitary farm-house in Normandy, where he had taken refuge, as it appeared, in a sudden panic, under a mistaken impression that he was pursued by the emissaries of the police. A malignant fever had laid him low amongst strangers, and brought him to the gates of the grave.

For more than a week they watched by his side, hope and fear alternating in their hearts. Hope prevailed at last. The fever was gone, and they dared to think that life was returning. One quiet autumn evening, a few rays of sunshine struggled through the closed shutters of the comfortable room where the patient lay sleeping, and rested on the fair head of Griselle, as she sat beside him. Gustave awoke from dreams of the time that his foot was injured and Griselle tending him, and the dream scarcely gone, he murmured, "Tell me the rest of that story about your old home, Griselle."

Griselle smiled—her own sweet smile—and answered

softly, "By-and-by, dear, when you have taken this soup and rested a little more."

The old habit of obedience to Griselle in times of sickness prevailed. He drank the soup, and settled quietly to sleep again.

He slept long. When he awoke Griselle was gone, and a priest in a soutane sat beside him, reading his breviary by the light of a shaded lamp.

"Griselle!" Gustave thought he shouted the name, but it was a weak, scarce audible whisper.

"We will not disturb your sister now, my son," the priest said. "When she wakes she will come to you."

The gentle tone of authority suited Gustave's present weakness, though it surprised him. He looked again, then exclaimed in a voice more like his own, though still very feeble, "Old Father Goudin! What wind has blown *you* here?"

"Be quiet, my son. Your sister could not have come here alone."

"Here! Where? Where am I?"

"In Normandy, near Escouey. In a farm-house belonging to kind and good country-people, who took you in and tended you out of charity."

"Have I been ill?"

"Yes, my son, very ill; but you are recovering, thanks to the good God. You must not talk now. I am going to read the Psalms for the evening." Long ere the priest had finished reading Gustave was once more fast asleep.

As his strength increased, Gustave endeavoured to recall the past. "What has been the matter with me, Griselle?" he asked.

"The fever, dear. The disease of the district, from which many are suffering now, and which you took the more easily because you were tired and overwrought."

"Tired! Ay, that I was, and frightened too. I can't bear to think of it. The long, long journey in that hateful

diligence—I thought it would never end. The heat, the dust, the jolting of the days ;—the dreary discomfort of the nights, when we were often all packed together in one close, filthy room. It was dreadful ! Once, I remember, my companions were soldiers, bound for the Mont St. Michel, and they talked so fiercely against the English that I wished myself leagues away ; because I meant to personate an English student leaving France on account of the war. Another time—oh, horrible ! we passed the body of a wretch hanging in chains by the road-side. They said he was a famous smuggler, and some one quietly remarked that he ought to have been broken on the wheel. I thought I should have fainted ; and my face, no doubt, betrayed me, for one of the travellers, a kind man, who spoke like M. Gerard with a southern accent, gave me brandy and said such friendly words, that had he not left us at the next stage I really think I would have told him all. Worse was to come, however. Next day, when we stopped to dine, the police came to search the diligence for a passenger whose *signalement* had been sent to them from the last town. I don't know who he was, or what was his crime ; I only know that I nearly lost my reason. Uncontrollable terror seized me, and at the first chance I slipped away and made my escape across the country in the twilight, I knew not whither. After that, I remember no more."

Griselle could not but feel amazed at the want of self-possession and common sense shown by her singularly clever and precocious brother. But this was no time for explanations or reproaches. She only said, laying her hand tenderly on his forehead, " My poor Gustave, how you have suffered !—But God has been good to you. And to us, helping us to find you."

" Father Goudin too ! What brings him here ?" he asked, still confused.

" It was he who first spoke of following you, and who planned all the journey. But for him I could not have attempted it. How good and tender he has been to me

throughout, I cannot tell you, Gustave. No knight of St. Louis could have shown himself more chivalrous."

"And my mother, what does she say?" Gustave asked, not without hesitation.

"She does not *say* much, brother."

"Don't look at me that way, Griselle," he exclaimed, burying his pale face in the coverlet. Then, after a pause, "With all my philosophy, I rather think I have been—a fool."

A statement Griselle forbore to dispute, for Goudin had said to her, "Let conscience do its work, my daughter."

## CHAPTER XII.

### GUSTAVE RECONSIDERS HIS POEM.

“En moins de rien, vous verrez les écoliers des Jésuites, Cicérons improvisés, faire la stupeur de leurs parents ; ils jasent, ils latinisent, ils scandent ; docteurs à quinze ans, et sots à jamais.”

MICHELET.

LATE one evening Griselle came hastily into the kitchen and keeping-room of the farm-house, where the large family of their host sate grouped around the hearth. Her pale and frightened looks caused two or three of these good-natured peasants to exclaim together, “What is it, ma’amselle ? Is young monsieur ill again ?”

“My brother is well enough, thank you. But I am uneasy about my uncle.”

“I am not surprised, ma’amselle,” said the farmer’s wife, looking up from her spinning-wheel. “M. le Curé has eaten nothing to speak of these two days.”

“Just now he sleeps,” Griselle continued ; “an uneasy sleep, broken with moanings. There is a strange look in his face. I fear——”

“Ah, yes, that is it !” groaned the old grandfather from his chair in the corner. “We might have guessed it. That fever is so taking.”

“Hush, father ! Don’t you see how frightened the poor young lady looks already ?” whispered his good-natured daughter-in-law. Then aloud, “Perhaps it is only fatigue, ma’amselle. M. le Curé never spared himself while the young gentleman was ill. I will come with you and see

him. I should know the look of a sick man, for many a one have I tended."

She came, and shook her head gravely.

"You think him very ill then?" said Griselle.

"M. Gustave has been worse. But we will send for the physician. Pierre shall go for him at once."

"At this hour, and such a distance! It is too much to ask——" Griselle hesitated.

"Say no more, ma'amselle. It is both honour and pleasure for my Pierre to serve M. le Curé; for he brings the blessing of the good God on our house."

Before an answer could be made she was gone. Griselle returned to her uncle's room. She soon heard the sound of horse hoofs clattering briskly over the stony road, and listened dreamily until they died away in the distance.

The voice of Goudin aroused her. "It seems hard this new trouble should come to thee, my child," he said. "Gustave so much better, and our return already planned. I had hoped——" He paused, looking at her thoughtfully and somewhat sadly. "No matter. God will do all for thee, and all He does is well."

It was difficult for Griselle to realise this, when the physician came and confirmed her fears that M. Goudin had taken the fever.

After that, the long days wore slowly on; but they were not without comfort. Gustave's recovery was rapid. Once able to leave the house, he began to take an interest, new and very beneficial to him, in country scenes and occupations. Often he would come in from the orchard or the farm, with the glow of returning health on his pale cheek, and tell Griselle, with a kind of triumph, how he had helped to gather the apples, or how Pierre had taken him to see the field his father intended to add to their farm.

Nor were the duties of the sick-room trying. The fever was not violent. The delirium never went beyond quiet wanderings of the mind amongst old scenes and faces, or gentle exhortations addressed to the sick and sorrowing;

whether these were the parishioners of St. André, the patients of Charenton, or the associates of Deacon Pâris, was not always apparent. Griselle was at first greatly surprised at the frequency, as well as at the affection and reverence, with which the name of Valérie was mentioned. Was there some mystery interwoven with that name? She might guess, but she never knew. Once, however, the priest said to her, evidently mistaking her for Madame Bairdon, "Little Valérie, you are not like your mother—you love this present world. But He that heareth prayer will remember, and though I am weak, He is strong."

Others would gladly have shared Griselle's loving cares for the uncomplaining, unexacting sufferer; but she would seldom accept of help, preferring to do everything for M. Goudin herself. She had a dim, unexplained feeling that in tending him she was fulfilling her step-mother's lack of service.

But, as time passed, she saw no return of strength, no progress towards recovery, though she looked for it, at first confidently and hopefully, then anxiously, at last sadly—almost despairingly.

"My daughter," the priest said one day, "I am better—no, stronger—to-day. I want you to go to the orchard with the girls, and let Gustave stay awhile with me."

Griselle obeyed, though reluctantly; and Gustave, with a subdued uneasy look, came softly into the darkened room, and took her place by the bedside.

After an interval of silence, the priest said gently, "Will you do a little service for me, my son? In yonder *sacoche* there is paper, and on the table an inkhorn and a pen. Write, if you will be so good, at my dictation."

Gustave found the paper, and sat down silently at the table.

"Write as follows," Goudin resumed,—

"'MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ,—A dying man, and a priest, needs your holy ministrations. He ventures to entreat you to come to him as speedily as you can.'

Bring it hither, my son; I would sign it myself."

Gustave brought it with a trembling hand, and the priest feebly affixed his signature, "François Goudin." "Now fold the sheet and write the address," he said. "'A M. l'Abbé Vergitôt, Curé d'Escouey.' At daybreak to-morrow, these good peasants send their butter and eggs to market; and this can go at the same time without giving trouble."

"Godfather," Gustave said with quivering lips, "you must not call yourself—that."

"What, my child?"

"What you said in that note. It is not true. You will recover. Every one says I was much worse than you, and yet I—"

"Sixteen and sixty are not quite the same, my son," said the priest with a tranquil smile. "But say nothing now to Griselle. Her kind heart will grieve, more than needs, for me. And I would fain tell her myself, that it is the best thing God could do for me." Then dismissing the subject quietly and completely, he added, "Sit down again beside me, Gustave. I want to speak to you."

Gustave did so, shading his eyes with his hand. Goudin took a well-worn pocket-book from under his pillow, opened it, found a paper, and gave it to the boy.

Gustave started. "Where—where did you get this?" he asked with evident surprise, though still in a subdued and quivering voice.

"Where did you leave it?" said the priest, sternly enough.

"I? At the door of M. Prosper's lodging, to be sure."

"Not there, Gustave. It was found in a drawer of your mother's shop."

"Oh, what misery!" cried Gustave in genuine distress. "Then she never saw my note, never knew that I vowed solemnly to restore all, to the uttermost farthing! That I never meant to wrong her, only to borrow what I would soon repay, with splendid interest! What a horrible mistake!"

"Mistake? What?" said the priest feebly.

"These verses were for M. Prosper—an idle jest of mine ; I thought I would show him what nonsense he had written—but no matter now. The note was for my mother, telling her all. I must have changed the papers unconsciously in my haste. So Prosper got the note !" he cried, shame and vexation crimsoning his cheek, "and my mother these vile worthless verses !"

"That note would have done little to save your mother the anxiety she has suffered, or to alter her estimate of your conduct. Thank God that He has given you the opportunity of frankly and fully acknowledging your fault, and repairing it by a genuine repentance. But those verses—would you write them now, Gustave? Do you still think all stories of self-sacrifice, of generous devotion for others, mere 'nonsense'—fable and delusion ?"

The priest half raised himself and gazed in the boy's face with yearning tenderness. He was thinking only of one Sacrifice in which, for him, life had its centre, and death its explanation. Could he but bring *that* story home, as a real fact, to the poor wanderer before him, he would thank God and lie down in peace to die !

So natural had it been to Goudin to sacrifice himself, that he never even thought he had done it. His godson thought it for the first time that moment. The light the priest so earnestly sought to throw upon a Form far away, beyond the bounded vision of Gustave, fell instead upon his own, and glorified it.

On the wasted face that met Gustave's answering gaze, Death had set his sign manual. The pallid features, the large bright wistful eyes, so earnestly reading his, proclaimed that presence. "In seeking me," Gustave thought, "he has found Death. Yet no complaint, no word of reproach, even for *me*, unworthy of his kindness though I was, has passed his lips !" He hid his face, while in a voice low and broken, and strangely unlike his own, he faltered, "I believe in self-sacrifice now, for I see it. As D'Assas gave his life for his king, you are giving yours for me !"

"If so, gladly, not grudgingly. Because I love thee, my son," the priest said, tenderly laying his hand on the bowed head of Gustave.

"There was a sound of abundance of rain." The long drought that had held that young heart as if in bands of iron, parched, hard, and dry, was over now, and the drops that soften and fertilise were falling fast. Gustave was weeping like a little child.

"Who am I, that God should thus have heard me?" the priest murmured. Then, after a pause, "Gustave! —Gustave, my son!"

"My father?" the boy whispered, looking up.

"Thou hast been loved with a love greater, higher than mine, 'as the heavens are higher than the earth.' For thee a sacrifice has been offered at which angels wonder; for thy life a life has been given, precious beyond thought or utterance. This love is more than philosophy, and includes it. Believe, and thou shalt see the glory of God."

He fell back on the pillow with a sigh of weariness. Gustave looked at him anxiously through his tears.

"It is nothing," he said, answering the look. "Only I am weary. Now I have given my message, I may rest, if God will."

Rest was near; yet not quite so near as François Goudin thought. The scholar had one lesson more to learn, ere—the days of his exile over and his education completed—the welcome summons home should reach his listening ear and thrill his waiting heart with joy.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### COUDIN'S LAST LESSON.

“ My dim sight aching,  
Gently thou’rt making  
Meet for awaking  
Where all is bright.”

L'ABBÉ VERGITÔT, Curé d' Escouey, responded promptly to the call of his dying brother. He came in his carriage, duly attended by an acolyte, bearing all that was necessary for the administration of the last sacraments. He was a tall dark man, with much dignity of manner and bearing ; and the farmer and his wife received him with an awe and reverence which ran no risk of being destroyed by familiarity, since, on account of their distance from the town, they did not often see him.

Griselle led him to the chamber of the penitent, and leaving them alone together, went in search of Gustave.

She found him, as she expected, in the only quiet spot the busy crowded farm-house afforded, the loft where the apples were stored.

“ *His confession cannot take long,*” she said mournfully. “ Let us be ready, Gustave. I know he would wish us to assist at what follows.”

Gustave hesitated. A boy's scepticism is usually more combative and self-asserting than a man's. “ Such mum-mery ! ” he muttered.

“ Hush ! brother. Would you grieve him *now ?* ”

"No," said Gustave, while large tears stood in his eyes. "Besides—I don't know—there may be some truth in the story of that life which he says was given for me."

But the abbé's interview with Goudin did not prove by any means a brief one. Gustave and Griselle waited long, at first perplexed and anxious, at length alarmed.

Meanwhile, in the chamber of death a scene was passing, five or six years before far from unusual, but at that date rather extraordinary.

M. l'Abbé Vergitôt had been a bitter enemy of the Jansenists, a zealous partisan of the Jesuits, and an intimate friend of the fanatical Archbishop of Paris, Christophe de Beaumont. That prelate, most reluctantly obliged to sacrifice him upon the altar of peace and send him into banishment, had prevailed upon his brother of Rouen to provide him with a good benefice at a distance from the capital. But banishment could not change the character or cool the zeal of Vergitôt. If, in these degenerate days, his brethren had grown so careless or so venal as to administer the sacraments to manifest Jansenists and heretics, *he* at least would be "amongst the faithless faithful only found." No unworthy compromise, no base truckling to the powers of this world, should stain his honour as champion of the Church, guardian of the ark of God. What could decrees of Parliament, or concessions wrung from a weak and dissolute king matter to *him*? The Pope had anathematized all who dared to maintain that the propositions he condemned as heretical were not to be found in the works of Jansenius. And in France the Bull Unigenitus had become the law of the land. This he knew, and knowing this, his duty was plain.

If any one had asked him to consider that the Parliament of Paris, and the provincial parliaments also, had made it a criminal offence to demand a "billet of confession" or similar test of orthodoxy from a penitent in danger of death, he would have answered that nothing could please him better than to suffer in a cause so holy, and he would

have been quite sincere. He might have added that this was just the moment for some such striking demonstration of zeal and fidelity. The affairs of his party were well-nigh desperate ; the triumph of the Parliaments and the Janse-nists almost complete.

M. l'Abbé Vergitôt was behind the times. Between 1757 and 1761 the world had changed ; was it his merit or his misfortune that he had not changed with it ? How could there be change in truth and falsehood, in right and wrong ?

After what seemed an almost interminable delay, the anxious watchers heard him descend the creaking stairs, and with a quick and hasty step. Griselle came to meet him, but he passed her by with a cold and stately salutation, and without speaking a word entered his carriage and drove away.

Griselle, followed by Gustave, went at once to the chamber of the dying priest.

He looked so pale and weak that Griselle was alarmed. But his voice was calm and firm, though sorrowful exceedingly, as he said—

“ M. l'Abbé declines to administer.”

Griselle, inexpressibly shocked, was silent. But Gustave, though he could not see the injury, felt the insult keenly, and broke out in passionate exclamation. “ The fool, the wretch, the villain ! Shame on him ! He shall learn——”

A look from Goudin silenced him effectually. “ Let him alone, for the Lord hath bidden him,” he said. Then, gently as ever, to Griselle, who offered him wine, “ I do not need it ; I am strong. Now go, my children ; for this wrestling I must be left alone.”

Gustave obeyed ; but Griselle, fearing his evident weakness, remained, concealed by the curtains of the bed.

François Goudin was cut to the heart. Had he been but a servant, who had toiled from infancy to grey hairs for his master—had he been but a soldier, who had fought and bled and endured hardness for his king—and had the

servant been dismissed with scorn and ignominy, the soldier stripped of his uniform and branded as a traitor, the pang would have been agonizing. But this was infinitely worse. For the servant worshipped his Master, the soldier adored his King. And what was now denied him was not the testimony of his Master's approval only, but, as he had been taught to think, the passport to His presence.

And yet there were many precedents to guide him. Such cases as his had occurred not unfrequently, some even within his own knowledge. A priest's verdict upon his fellow-priest, a man's upon his fellow-man, was assuredly not infallible. All men were liable to err. *All* men, he reflected —then he himself as well as his judge. Ought he to have withheld or softened the expression of his opinions, or at least to have yielded somewhat? A few concessions, to the uninitiated almost absurdly trifling, would have contented the abbé, and saved all this agony. What! is God mocked? should he dare to enter His presence with a lie in his right hand?

He remembered the dying nun of Port Royal, who, when refused the sacraments by Jesuit fanaticism, raised her eyes in calm assurance to heaven, repeating the words of St. Augustine, “*Crede et manducasti.*” And did not he also believe, and with all his heart, and mind, and soul, and strength? And the love of God—was it not infinite? Yes, but sin was infinite too. His sins were more than he could number, and greater than he could bear. The remembrance of them was grievous unto him, the burden of them was intolerable.

But then, there was the Cross. Beyond all shadow of doubt, his only hope was there. The question was not from whom peace and pardon were to come—that was settled long ago—but through what channel. How should he touch the Cross? How should the Cross touch him with healing efficacy?

Christ's faithful soldier and servant had he truly been, well-nigh all his life. But the servant had held communion

with his Master only through the appointed officers of the household, the soldier had caught the word of command as it passed along the ranks, content to see the King himself afar off, at review or festival, and to cherish a trembling hope that when the strife was over and the victory won, one look from the Face, one word from the lips he loved might be vouchsafed, even to him. And now those set in authority disallowed his claim, and did all that in them lay to bar his access.

In this sore strait and agony what was left to soldier and servant? Only to go himself—alone—into the King's presence-chamber, through the way opened long ago by a bleeding hand, and which since then “no man can shut.” Alone he must enter there, unaided he must plead his cause with the Father of spirits, “the King immortal, invisible.” What plea should he bring with him there? That of God's servant in the days of old, who “wept sore, and turned his face towards the wall” and prayed, saying, “Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart?” He might have pleaded this as truly as Hezekiah—but the thought was abhorrent. He flung it from him with a shudder. In the pure light of that Presence where he stood now he could only veil his face, bow his head, and cry “Unclean.”

Yet one word he could say, in spite of all;—not, “Lord, I have walked before thee in truth and sincerity,” but, “Lord, thou knowest all things—thou knowest that I love thee.” And the cry came up from the very depths of his heart.

But with it came a strange sense of its inadequacy, its futility. “I have loved thee” seemed as poor a plea as “I have served thee.” What, after all, was that cry, “Thou knowest that I love thee,” save the echo of another voice, “I have loved *thee* with an everlasting love?” “We love Him because”—and only because—“He first loved us.” “And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.”

The little lamp which had been kindled to cheer and illumine his darkness—his love to God—was no more regarded now, for the casement was flung open wide, and the glorious sunshine of God's love to him streamed around him.

And thus the King looked upon him, with “those deep pathetic eyes that closed in death to save him.” That look transformed the faithful soldier and servant into the happy child—the kneeling suppliant into the friend and brother, who trusted and was at rest. This was François Goudin's last lesson.

Then there was a great calm, a silence like that the mystic seer of Patmos felt, for half an hour, in the Heaven of heavens. Whether he was conscious or unconscious, in the body or out of the body, François Goudin scarcely knew. He only knew that Christ was with him.

But the peace that filled his soul like a river, or rather like “a place of broad rivers and streams,” was so clear in its tranquil depth, that the cares and interests of others could, even yet, be reflected there.

By-and-by he stirred and murmured softly, “Griselle.” She was at his side in a moment. “I have a word for thee, my child,” he said.

She put wine and water to his lips, with an entreaty that he would wait to speak to her till he was stronger.

“I am strong now,” he answered. “My daughter, commend me to your honoured father; assure him of my gratitude for many kindnesses, and entreat him to add to them yet one more, pardon for my dear godson. Gustave will do well, Griselle, if God give him the child's heart, which till now he never had. That is my prayer for him. For thee, dear child——” For a moment his voice faltered. Then he resumed, laying his hand tenderly on her bowed head, “God give thee rest, Griselle, in the house of thine husband.”

A thrill passed through the girl's slender frame, but her

face was hidden. "Tell M. Gerard this from the border of the grave," the dying priest continued—"where I stand now, all is real. With me, what *seems* has passed away for ever, only what *is* remains. I stand alone, face to face with death. Yet not alone. God *is*, and Christ. His life is real, as the death He came to conquer—His redemption sure, as the decay of this mortal frame. 'As it is appointed unto men once to die, so Christ—'" His voice grew faint, and Griselle only caught the words, "'Unto them that look'—'appear'—'unto salvation.'"

She rose and once more administered a cordial. But one doubt so troubled her loving heart that she could not resist the yearning wish to have it set at rest. "Dear father," she asked, with faltering lips, "will you assure me there is no shadow left now, by what took place to-day?"

"There is none," he answered calmly. "I do not think of the after—— I cannot, and I need not. His hand shall lead, His right hand guide. He has the keys of hell and of death. But one word more, Griselle. Gentle and loving hast thou been to me; not now alone, but always. For those kind words and looks in the bygone days, cared for and noted far more than thou couldst know, I thank thee now, my child. But most of all for the tenderness that has made these hours of pain and weakness a Sabbath and a festival to me. I never thought to be tended thus. I thought to die alone, in my lodging, with only the concierge to give me a cup of water in my need. What have I done that God should provide such pleasant things for me at last? Perhaps it was well they came not sooner, else it might have been hard to leave them. Yet no—not *hard*. How could I but rejoice and be glad to go 'unto God, my exceeding joy?'"

Another day wore slowly by. Then Griselle and Gustave sat together, keeping watch beside the dead. And Griselle said softly, "Brother, do not weep thus. He has only gone whither he wished to go—unto God his exceeding joy."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE FARMER-GENERAL'S GUEST.

"Shall bid each righteous heart exult to see  
Peace to the slave and vengeance on the free."

THE room was small, "petits appartements" were the taste of the day; but it was luxurious. A sofa covered with crimson silk, a fauteuil, a buhl table, and a few curiously wrought high-backed chairs, composed the furniture; the adornments were Sèvres china of the fashionable "pâte tendre," a picture or two of Boucher's, and half a dozen mirrors.

Wealth, rather than taste, was visible everywhere, except perhaps in the dress of the solitary occupant, Désiré Gerard. And even he looked as if he had purposely made himself as striking an example as he could of the anomalies of the time. A powdered perruque surmounted his young, fresh, handsome face; and although his habiliments were *à la Grecque*, according to the sense attached by Parisian tailors to that much-abused term, he wore his lace ruffles and his dainty sword, like Buffon, who always wrote in full dress. He had frequent recourse to a golden snuff-box (the gift of some admirer of his art), perhaps to counteract the effects of the heavy perfume of amber that pervaded the room. He was busily noting down some music, pausing every now and then to try over a melody on his harpsichord, or to refer to the large volume that lay open on the table before him—strangest anomaly of all, this was De Sacy's Bible.

A valet, in the gaudy livery of his host, M. Pelletier, knocked at the door and announced a visitor.

Gerard looked up, and seeing his friend Jules Prosper, sprang from his seat, kissed him on both cheeks, embraced him, and was embraced by him with true French effusion.

After many compliments and mutual civilities, Gerard inquired, "How did you come hither, my friend?"

"Fortune was unusually kind to me, and found me a place in a carriage going to Fontainebleau. Bah! it is cold, and wet, and dreary outside," he added, with a shudder. "What a charming abode you have found here, friend Gerard! Truly your life must glide along like a dream."

"So it does," said Gerard, as he rose to ring for refreshments.

In a short time a repast was served, consisting of coffee and costly liqueurs, with fruit and ices, and cakes of various kinds. A healthy appetite might have craved less luxury and more solid nutriment; as a healthy spirit would have pined unsatisfied amidst the unwholesome sweets and stimulants with which the moral atmosphere of the place was overladen. Nor was Gerard quite unconscious of this.

Whilst he drank coffee and Prosper curaçoa, talk went on briskly. "I am like a prisoner in an enchanted castle," Gerard said laughingly. "Whenever I speak of quitting his hospitable roof, M. Pelletier only asks what I want, and tells me he will send to Paris for it immediately. 'Why go fetch it yourself, my dear Gerard,' he says, 'when there are all these idle people here, dying of ennui?'"

"And you," said Prosper, "with all your courage, you cannot exactly say to him, 'My dear Pelletier, I am dying of ennui myself!'"

"Nor would it be true, if I did. More like the truth to say, 'Monsieur, the air of your delightful abode is so soft, so delicious, so charming, that it is lulling me to sleep, and, if some very startling occurrence does not happen à propos to arouse me, I shall sleep on for ever.'"

"What matter how long you sleep, if you dream music?" said Prosper, drawing his friend's papers towards him.

"Oh, that is nothing—a mere sketch," said Gerard a little shyly. "I am only just trying my wings."

"For a lofty flight, it seems," said Prosper, as a few words scrawled by way of memorandum caught his eye. "As far as Egypt and the Red Sea. An oratorio, I presume?"

"Well, oratorios are the newest thing now," said Gerard, adopting the worldly tone of his companion, and thereby denying his own higher nature, which revelled in the grand and solemn harmonies of sacred song. Yet his words were true. Oratorios were then a novelty, and, as such, were the passion of the hour with the frivolous Parisian world.

"Oratorios may be in very good tone, but Moses and the Children of Israel are decidedly passé," Prosper objected.

"Indeed they are not," Gerard replied more gravely. "Any day, you may see the slaves of the brick-kiln, whom no man pities, in our fields and by our roadsides, making bricks without straw for the seigneur or the king. Moses, it is true, has not appeared yet. But I hope you and I may live to see him."

"I had rather be excused. *Moses*, of all men! At whom M. de Voltaire had learned to scoff ere he was three years old! A bigoted, barbarous, cruel——"

"Softly, Prosper! I am growing fond of my hero, and I will not have him abused. I don't know what you mean by applying bigoted, as a term of reproach, to a man who made the promulgation of a religion the work of his life. But, barbarous? Look at his laws! They have influenced the mind of humanity from his days to our own; and still, in the midst of our highest civilisation, they meet us at every turn. Look at the people those laws educated! Were they a mere 'set of barbarians?' Why, even in their degradation and misery, during the Middle Ages, they were the forerunners of modern science and the prophets of modern enlightenment. The Jew was the merchant, the physician, the astronomer—ay, often the philosopher—of

his generation. And, cruel? There is not, in the whole code of Moses, a single cruel or degrading punishment. Death was inflicted—pretty often, perhaps because it was not known in those ages of ignorance that man has but one life to lose. But torture, never! Stoning was the national form of capital punishment; and we know, from other sources, that it was quick and painless, one or two blows killing the victim. It is true that the Jewish history, like all other authentic ancient histories, abounds in wars, murders, and massacres; but it is remarkable for the absence of all nameless horrors worse than these. Does the whole Bible contain one story half as revolting as that of the execution of Damiens, which took place the other day in civilised Paris, while some of those very philosophers and fine ladies, who profess themselves horrified by the cruelties of Moses and Joshua, looked on with unshrinking eye? I repeat it, in no other history is there the same total absence of that fiendish propensity that gloats over the infliction of agony."

"A fierce tirade, most eloquent of musicians! I fear you are growing devout. Has your friend, Madame Geoffrin, converted you?"

"Spare your sneers, Prosper. I am neither fierce nor eloquent, still less devout; but I am in earnest. And the philosophers sometimes talk such very unphilosophic nonsense, that, as M. Duclos said the other day, they are almost enough to make a man go to mass."

"No man is a philosopher when he is angry," Prosper answered. "Lay that to heart for yourself, M. Gerard. Though why men should get angry about religion, any more than about mathematics or astronomy, I confess I cannot imagine."

"Because, while no man need meddle with mathematics or astronomy unless he pleases, religion is every man's business, and will let no man alone. Because too, most unhappily, in our country the ministers of religion have played into the hands of despotism, and sold the people

to their oppressors. This brings me back to my Israelitish hero. Moses will outlast your time and mine, Prosper. Perhaps, wherein you think he is behind the age, he may prove to have been before it. And in one thing, certainly, he is fairly ahead of us—in his heroic resistance to an abominable tyranny."

"Oh, I begin to understand ! The object of your admiration is not Moses of the Ten Commandments, but Moses of the Ten Plagues of Egypt. Not Moses the legislator, but Moses the patriot."

"Moses, the Israelitish slave, who stood undaunted in the presence of the Egyptian tyrant, saying, 'Let my people go !'"

"I suppose the subject *has* capabilities," Prosper admitted candidly. "But why not try an opera instead of one of those dull, heavy oratorios? I might write the libretto, and you, of course, the music."

For a moment Gerard looked indignant ; then the absurdity of the notion overcame his vexation, and he laughed. "What a Moses you would give us, Prosper ! A philosophic marquis, in perruque and powder, fresh from the salons !"

"Let those laugh who win," said Prosper, in a tone of pique. "Gerard, have you heard anything lately of your lace-making friend ?"

"Do you mean Madame Bairdon ?" Gerard asked, flushing hotly in spite of his will.

"Of her, or her interesting family ?"

"Well, not very lately... Why do you ask ?" said Gerard, trying to look indifferent.

"Oh, for no particular reason," Prosper answered, helping himself again to curaçoa.

Gerard kept silence. Prosper's manner made him uneasy ; but he was too proud to ask for an explanation. He knew besides that, if Prosper had anything to say, he would not long be able to deny himself the gratification of saying it.

He was right. "The bourgeoisie are growing more and more high-minded every day," said Prosper, as he set down his empty glass. "One is sometimes glad when they get a downfall. But the Bairdons have always behaved so well, it seems a pity."

"What seems a pity?"

"That the son should turn out a *mauvais sujet*—in fact, a perfectly incorrigible scamp. You knew he was always a good-for-nothing. And now he has absconded with some of his mother's lace."

"I don't believe it," said Gerard.

"It is true, nevertheless. You may wish now you had spared yourself the trouble of picking him up from under the horse-hoofs. And I dare say his father and mother wish the same."

"I tell you I don't believe it," Gerard reiterated.

"Will this convince you, O most philosophic of musicians?" He placed before Gerard's eyes Gustave's hapless note of excuse and apology to his mother.

"Did you forge that precious document?" cried Gerard with angry contempt.

"You are courtesy itself this morning! But I forgive you; for you rather liked the little wretch, and used to patronise him; so, naturally, you feel disappointed. Moreover, you must wonder how such a paper could possibly have fallen into *my* hands. He had evidently written me a note of some kind (I am sure I cannot guess what induced him to do me the honour; unless, perhaps, he wanted to ask your address), and then in his haste and confusion exchanged the papers, and sent me the wrong one. I threw it aside, and had forgotten all about it; when it was recalled to my mind by the rumour of the boy's escapade. That explained it, with a vengeance. The family try to hide their misfortune; and you may believe, if you please, that Gustave Bairdon has been sent to Lyons on business by his mother; I don't."

It occurred to Gerard, as he listened, that, although a

tolerable marksman, he had never yet been engaged in an affair of honour, and that it would afford him singular gratification to take his stand twenty paces from Prosper, with a loaded pistol in his hand.

"Of course," Prosper resumed, after a long pause—"of course you will drop your acquaintance with the family."

"There are acquaintances I should drop with far greater pleasure," said Gerard, with a look and manner that gave point to his words.

But Prosper was determined not to quarrel. Indeed in his own way he was sincerely desirous of benefiting Gerard. He was aware that the brilliant young musician had it in his power to form an alliance much more advantageous to his prospects than the one he contemplated at present; and he therefore used all his influence and all his art to discredit the Bairdons. His friendship was zealous, and up to a certain point it was genuine—as genuine at least as any other part of his character—although perhaps it was not wholly disinterested. Rightly judging that upon this occasion he had gone quite far enough, he apologized, assured Gerard in effusive terms of his unalterable affection, and tried in every way to restore him to his wonted good-humour.

And Gerard was not implacable. "Come with me," he said, "and I will show you this enchanted castle. It is worth seeing; so are the pleasure grounds."

Prosper's admiration of their fantastic and artificial splendours fully satisfied him; and he asked him to remain for dinner, knowing that such an invitation would be very agreeable to the wishes of his host.

Prosper was glad to accept it, for several reasons. As he told one of his intimates the next day, "I made two friends and one enemy; pretty well for an evening's work, was it not, mon cher? Better still, I made the acquaintance of M. Gerard's special confidant, a gay little abbé called Arboissière. He tells me there is no doubt at all

of Mademoiselle Zélie de Lioncourt's conquest. What should he stay there for, all this time, away from the delights of Paris, except to be in her neighbourhood? The demoiselle and her preux chevalier have quarrelled just now, it is true—but that goes for nothing. We are likely to see our handsome young musician lord of M. de Lioncourt's tumble-down owl's nest of a château one of these days—an alliance which will reflect glory on art and letters, besides bringing down the pride of ‘la petite noblesse.’ Moreover, the father, poor though he is, has influence, and could do something for me. And, at all events, there's the right of shooting over his lands. Voilà, mon enfant!”

## CHAPTER XV.

"LA NORLESSE COMMERCANTE."

"Have you no fear?"

"Of what? That heaven should fall?"

"No; but that earth

Should arm in madness."

ABBÉS abounded in the society of old France. In-triguing abbés, stained with every vice, like Bernis; infidel abbés, like Raynal; witty, philosophic abbés, like Galiani, were specimens of the class, worthy the age in which it was seriously proposed to bestow a cardinal's hat upon Voltaire. "But still they come, and still the cry is more." There were abbés fierce and fanatical, abbés scientific and studious, abbés soberly and sincerely devout. And there was yet another kind of abbé, familiar to the caricaturists of the day, the penniless abbé, the rich man's dependent and sycophant, often his maître d'hotel, who might be seen standing napkin in hand, reviewing and drilling his long and useless train of pampered servants.

There was such a personage amongst the guests and habitués of the wealthy farmer-general. M. l'Abbé de Frontignac Arboissère claimed ancestry, and still boasted relatives, who would have consigned all M. Pelletier's splendours to ineffable contempt with the single word "bourgeoise!" But Arboissère's dissipations (even then considered outrageous) had robbed him of everything save his noble name, and left him no choice except a permanent

retreat with some religious order, or a rôle such as that he condescended to play in M. Pelletier's household.

Gerard did not feel flattered by the discovery that he stood high in the favour of this anomalous personage. Having no desire for his friendship, he avoided him and repelled his advances, not without brusquerie. But in vain. The abbé not only gave out that he was his confidant, but determined really to be so. And at last one day he was fairly caught, caged in a summer-house *à la Grecque*, under the shade of marble gods and goddesses, and bound with the fetters, at that time adamantine, of courtesy and politeness.

He had been enduring, or rather enjoying, what his gay intimates called "a retreat." With full permission from his indulgent host, he had remained in the country for the winter, shut up in his own apartments, seeing no one, hearing nothing from the outer world, while in one long ecstasy of passion he obeyed the inspirations of his art. But the ecstasy was over now, and it had left him with a weary frame, with nerves unstrung, and with a temper even more than usually excitable and impressible.

"Monsieur takes an interest in all the questions of the day?" said the abbé, presenting his snuff-box.

Gerard acknowledged that he did, but somewhat perversely remarked, that when last he visited Paris, the question of the day, *par excellence*, seemed to be who could show off Pantin to the best advantage.

Pantin was a ridiculous toy, a kind of dancing-doll, which it was then fashionable even for the gravest personages to carry about to public places, and to exhibit in absurd and ludicrous attitudes. It was discussed for ten minutes by Gerard and the abbé with all the gravity such a theme demanded, then Arboissière returned to the charge. "Perhaps the question of 'La noblesse commerçante' has happened, amongst others, to engage the curiosity of monsieur?"

Gerard replied by a most expressive shrug of his

shoulders—a gesture meant to intimate that such a question was beneath the contempt of a philosopher. This was the tone adopted by his clique ; it was an easy way of manifesting their sentiments towards the “noblesse,” who had raised the discussion in order to effect a compromise between their pride and their avarice.

It really was a pity, Arboissière hinted, that social prejudices should debar “La noblesse de l'épée” from a career, for which the access their birth afforded them to the counsels of their sovereign gave them singular and splendid facilities. Prejudice was still strong, however. Therefore it was better—*certainly* better and more prudent—for a member of the high nobility, who wished to engage in a promising commercial speculation, to veil his personality behind some less illustrious name, and of course to share the profits largely with the working partner. Thus an intelligent man of the people, “roturier,” but still “bien gentil,” with a good address and personally acceptable to the nobility—was monsieur doing him the honour to follow him?—might in a short time acquire a princely fortune.

There were vague rumours, not unknown to Gerard, that it was the fruits of some such secret partnership which had enabled M. de Voltaire to play the grand seigneur at Ferney ; and to devote himself, with no care for immediate pecuniary profit, to the propagation of his cold and sterile faith.

With but little encouragement from Gerard, Arboissière proceeded to unfold his scheme. It appeared that a distant connection of his own, a man high in rank and office, needed such a partner, and had expressed his preference for a literary man or an artist, because it was the fashion for the noblesse to admit such to their intimacy, and therefore the necessary intercourse would excite neither remark nor suspicion. The high personage alluded to was privy to the king's most secret, most confidential arrangements. He could even read the tables of the price of corn, which were brought every day into the “petits appartements.” And

where his Majesty did a great deal of business on his own account, his Majesty's agents might surely do a little on theirs.

Gerard's answer was a bitter scoff about the kind of business with which, in those days, Majesty concerned itself. And into such an abyss of moral degradation had the "golden lilies" of France and the crown of St. Louis been dragged by their miserable wearer, that the abbé did not even pretend to affect surprise or disapproval. "I am not asking *you* to touch the mud, even with the ends of your fingers," he answered. "Peste ! I am a man of the world, and I am well aware I have the honour of addressing 'un parfait honnête homme.' I am merely intimating that a noble duke and peer, a member of his Majesty's Council, wants just such a man to stand between him and the merchants, as the nominal purchaser of corn for their joint benefit."

It did not occur to Gerard that the proposed traffic was no less than a partnership in robbery, and robbery of the meanest and most hateful kind. "He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him." It only occurred to him that in a single year he might be a rich man, buy one of the numerous "Places" that conferred nobility upon their holders, and proudly ask the hand of Griselle from her father, whose ambition he well knew it had been to see his daughter married in his own class.

"It is the very great regard, the distinguished sentiments of admiration I entertain for monsieur, which have induced me to name the matter," Arboissière continued. "Otherwise, I know scores of gentlemen who would consider such a hint the sweetest music they could dance to."

"I thank you, M. l'Abbé," Gerard said, offering his own snuff-box, and rising to put an end to the interview. "But the matter requires consideration. We will discuss it another time, if you please."

Arboissière suggested that they might resume the conversation at the same hour on the following day.

"To-morrow then, monsieur, if you will," said Gerard.

Arboissère agreed. "I am going to town this afternoon," he remarked. "Yesterday, as I offered my respects at the château to Madame de Lioncourt, that altogether charming Mademoiselle Zélie did me the honour to request me to choose a lap-dog for her. I need not say with what transports I obey," he added, laying his hand on his heart. "Perhaps, however, I may owe the young lady's kindness to the warm but well-merited praises I bestowed upon a certain Fantasia which I noticed lying open beside her spinet."

Gerard acknowledged the compliment by a bow, but answered coldly enough, "I am glad to hear that *your* friends do me the honour to approve my compositions. Au revoir, monsieur." And so they parted.

Gerard did not waste one thought upon Zélie de Lioncourt. All his assumed coldness gone now, he walked towards his own apartments with a rapid step, his heart on fire with love and hope and bright anticipation.

He little guessed to what villainy he was asked to sell himself. Had he known what we know now, he would have chosen absolute starvation—ay, he would even have chosen never to look on the face of Griselle again—rather than have accepted the part M. l'Abbé d'Arboissère so obligingly chalked out for him. But the odious "Pacte de la Famine" was still a secret. How could Gerard imagine that the "first gentleman of France" was using the august privileges of royalty for the vile purpose of forcing up corn to starvation prices, that the trade rendered profitable by such forestalling might fill his purse, emptied by yet viler needs? Whilst millions were lavished on pleasures not to be named, famine after famine was sweeping over France with desolating fury. The people suffered and died, and the wail of their anguish never reached the throne of Louis; but it entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, as Louis knew, years afterward, on his miserable, deserted death-bed.

Gerard's moral organization was sensitive ; an undefined foreboding—like the indescribable sensation that tells a man walking in darkness of something near which will hurt him—warned him that all was not right. His philosophic friends were teaching him to hate regal tyranny with a hatred growing stronger and fiercer every day. Between Paris and Versailles the feud was deadly. And did not the abbé's proposition mean alliance with Versailles ?—But then the philosophers were not usually scrupulous in their conduct. Had he asked counsel at their lips, he would probably have been told to hold his peace, make his fortune, and then consecrate his leisure to the service of letters and humanity. Many of the leaders of advanced thought, whilst echoing Diderot's wish to strangle the last king with the entrails of the last priest, thankfully accepted everything king or priest had to give ; nay, sued for place and pension to the vilest favourites of an abandoned monarch. Even the amiable Marmontel would only have laughed at Gerard's scruples.

Absorbed in the effort to reason them down, he walked onwards, and by-and-by came unawares upon some of M. Pelletier's guests, who, like himself, had remained for the winter in the country. They had been enjoying the early spring sunshine upon one of the terraces, and were now gathered in an eager group around a young man who was reading a letter aloud. Gerard would have turned away unperceived had not three words arrested him—uttered low, but with that deep, prolonged intonation of intense feeling to which the French tongue lends itself easily—“ C'est une horreur ! ”

He stepped into the midst of the group, where all welcomed him with cordiality, from the precise, punctilious old marquis (some marquises honoured farmers-general with their visits), who was sitting, cane in hand, on the sunniest seat of the terrace, to the fair young boy lying at his feet, whose exquisite voice, well trained by Gerard, had won his admission into that brilliant, but doubtful society.

When their compliments had been duly acknowledged and returned, Gerard asked,—

“What were you discussing, messieurs, when I had the honour to join you?”

“A letter from Toulouse. All is over now.”

“All over! What do you mean?”

“Surely you have not been so completely buried as to have heard nothing of the ‘affaire Calas?’”

“Oh yes, I heard of it. But I thought there was no doubt of the man’s acquittal. The accusation seemed incredible.”

“Still more incredible that in this year of grace 1762—because the people of Toulouse are fanatics and the magistrates fools—Jean Calas has been—broken alive upon the wheel.”

“Horrible!” cried Gerard.

“An unheard-of atrocity!” the young man continued.  
“Posterity will refuse to believe it.”

“How was it possible?” asked Gerard.

“To explain the possibility, I must go back to the beginning of the story. You will pardon me that, M. Gerard, since you seem to remember so little about it. Jean Calas, merchant of Toulouse, sixty-four years of age, is—or was—a very honest, worthy man, respected by every one, but he was a Protestant. He had three sons, the eldest—a clever ambitious youth—hated the desk and the ledger, but found every other career closed to him, because he was too honest, or too proud, to obtain a ‘certificate of catholicity.’ He thought of becoming a preacher in his own sect, but that, as you are aware, is still a capital crime, for which one Pasteur Rochette was hanged only the other day. ‘It is a bad trade that leads to the gallows,’ said the friends of Marc Antoine Calas. So the young man remained at home in idleness, and grew moody, dejected, miserable. At last, on the evening of the 13th of October, he committed suicide, hanging himself in his father’s shop. The afflicted family would fain have hid their sorrow from the

public eye. In vain ; their confusion and horror, their cries and sobs, betrayed all, and the mob forced its way into the house of mourning. An unknown voice cried aloud that Marc Antoine Calas had been about to become a Catholic ; and the rumour passed from lip to lip. Two of the capitouls\* were present ; one of them treated this folly with the scorn it merited ; the other—the too-famous capitoul David—took it up eagerly, and ordered an investigation. But from that time forth all investigation was mockery. The idea seized upon the mob that the unhappy young man was a martyr to the Catholic faith, put to death by his father, with the consent of the family. No jot or tittle of evidence was adduced in support of the absurd accusation. But arouse the fanaticism of an ignorant mob, and you fling a match into a powder magazine. Marc Antoine Calas was buried as a martyr, with tapers, wreaths, and requiems ; while the unfortunate family were thrown into a dungeon, and indicted for parricide. The father and mother, a son and two daughters, their servant, and a young lad named Lavaysse who was supping with them on the fatal night, were all dragged together into this abyss of misery."

"Where was law ? Where was justice ?" Gerard asked with rapidly-changing colour. He looked greatly agitated—more so than even the horror of the story could account for.

His informant answered sadly, "The ministers of law and the guardians of justice sided with the mob ; only one or two saving themselves from the execration of posterity by protesting. The capitoul David acted throughout a part worthy of St. Dominic ; still, as every unprejudiced man thought the indictment a tissue of improbabilities, the process dragged. And Jean Calas, called suddenly from desk and ledger to contend with worse than wild beasts, defended himself with a calmness, a dignity, an intrepidity truly amazing.

\* Magistrates of Toulouse.

"Only once was he unworthy of himself. A Protestant minister, Paul Rabaut of Nismes, wrote a pamphlet in his defence. As might have been expected, such advocacy was worse than useless. Rabaut's pamphlet was burned by the public executioner; and Calas, who saw the flames on his way to the place of trial, lost courage, grew confused, and gave his enemies an advantage they failed not to use. But why recall the variations of fortune, the alternations of hope and fear? All has ended—as you have heard."

"Read the letter for M. Gerard," said one of the bystanders.

"Nay, spare me *that*. M. Gerard knows the meaning of words. The sentence was—'The torture, ordinary and extraordinary, and to be broken alive on the wheel.'

Gerard shuddered. This was what men were doing while he sat apart, wrapped in his delicious dream of melody.

"No drop in the cup of bitterness was spared the victim," the young man continued, not without emotion. "At last —on the wheel—two long hours—— But a courage and fortitude well-nigh incredible upheld him throughout; and even, strange as this may seem, prevailed to turn the tide of popular feeling. The hoary head, the serene and noble bearing, the silent endurance, the calm, reiterated assurance 'I die innocent,' touched the hearts of all. In his agony he prayed, but uttered no complaint. He pardoned and excused his judges, repeating, 'They have been misled, without doubt, they have been misled by false witnesses.' And he spent his last breath in pleading for his young guest, 'that poor child' Lavaysse. 'So, in early ages, died the martyrs of our faith,' was the witness of the priests who attended him."

"Tell what *he* said, monsieur," said the boy, lifting up a tear-stained face.

"He said, 'I die innocent. Jesus Christ, who was innocence itself, willed to die in anguish yet more cruel!'"

At the Name, thus uttered, the old marquis uncovered

and bowed his head, and others, little used to reverence, did the same. There was a solemn silence, and all started when it was broken by a wail from the boy's young lips,—

"And oh, messieurs, you tell me there is *no God* to take pity and to do justice!"

"Humanity is taking pity; Humanity will do justice. Its great heart is stirred at last." So some one said, not Gerard.

"What good will Humanity do Calas, if there is no Christ?" the boy persisted. "What good will it do Calas' wife and children if they never see him again—never know that all is made up to him?"

"Chut! quel enfant terrible! What can a child know about these things?" said one of the elders; and the boy, thus repressed, stole away, weeping silently.

"There is *one* at least whose heart is stirred to its depths," observed the marquis. "The old lion of Ferney is aroused at last. And his roar will make the capitouls of Toulouse tremble in their robes of office."

"Yes," another added. "Baron Grimm has had a letter from Ferney, in answer to a request for a promised tragedy. 'No tragedy from me,' says Voltaire, 'until the tragedy of Toulouse is finished!'"

"There's more of the poet-heart in that word than in many a tragedy," Gerard said; and then he also quitted the group, perhaps unwilling to betray the extent to which the story moved him.

And here let us pay the tribute justly due to Arouet de Voltaire. His was no pity idly evaporating in words. From that hour he spared neither gold, nor time, nor personal exertion, until—mainly through his unceasing efforts—three years afterwards the memory of Calas was "rehabilitated," his sentence reversed, and his property restored to his family. Alas! that Voltaire never knew—that he would not know—Him to whom he ministered thus in His suffering members! But if a feeling, not all ungentle, rises in our hearts towards one whose words and works unques-

tionably wrought much evil, it is because—and not on this occasion only—Voltaire showed himself neighbour to him that fell among thieves. Long had the Huguenot lain by the wayside wounded and half dead, while priest and Levite not only passed by on the other side, but acted the robbers' part themselves—it was this Samaritan who showed mercy on him. Years afterwards, in Voltaire's own day of triumph —when the world-famous philosopher and author was for an hour the idol of Paris—he overheard some stranger ask the question, “For whom is it the crowd are shouting thus?” “Oh, it is for the deliverer of the Calas!” answered the person addressed, a poor woman. And Voltaire acknowledged *that* the sweetest moment of his triumph.

As for Calas—bitter though the cup of anguish he had to drink undoubtedly was—could he have foreseen the use God would make of that anguish, he might have gladly embraced the cross. The severe communion to which he belonged scarcely grants him the honoured name of martyr. Yet ten thousand of her martyrs suffered and bled without accomplishing what was given him to do. For nearly a hundred years had the Protestants of France groaned beneath a horrible tyranny. They died on the rack, the wheel, the gibbet; in galleys, in dungeons, in convents; or broken-hearted for their children who “were not”—and no man pitied them. But at the wrongs of Calas a cry arose that “rang from sea to sea.” The great, the wise, the mighty of earth, took up the cause of the persecuted community. Partly through their exertions, partly through the progress of intelligence and humanity, martyrdoms became thenceforth impossible. Pasteur Rochette, the three Greniers, and a month later Jean Calas, were “the last drops of a thunder-shower.” After that the sky grew clear.

God was judging between the Church of France that was in king's palaces, gorgeously appareled and living delicately, and the Church of France that dwelt solitary in the Desert, and drank the dregs of the cup of trembling. And

already His sentence had gone forth. "Thus saith thy Lord, the Eternal, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of His people, Behold, I have taken out of thy hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury ; thou shalt no more drink it again; but I will put it into the hands of them that afflict thee, which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over ; and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street to them that went over."

Yet in the Church that persecuted, He also had his hidden ones. *He* knew them throughout all ; and men learned to know them in the stormy days of the Revolution, when the cup of trembling was indeed borne to their lips. And they, too, like their brethren in the Desert, took it meekly and bravely, only seeing Him whose pierced hand gave it, only saying, as He did once, "Thy will be done."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### A PLACE WHERE TWO WAYS MET.

"I thought I could not breathe in that fine air,  
That pure severity of perfect light,  
I wanted warmth and colour."

THE glory had passed from Gerard's dream. "The palace of music he reared" seemed to melt and vanish away as quickly as did the palace of ice raised by imperial pride in the bright brief sunshine of the northern summer. It was not merely the horror of the tale he had just heard that produced this effect upon him. The calamity that overtakes a stranger excites compassion; the misfortune that strikes a kinsman awakens sorrow.

Désiré Gerard, a Catholic by education, an infidel by deliberate choice, was a Protestant by birth. At eight years old he had been taken by force from his family, and consigned to a Jesuit school; though through the kindness of the patron whose attention had been attracted by his genius he was soon removed from the hated control of the Jesuits, and placed under instructors who regarded the Mass rather as a musical exhibition than as a religious dogma.

The vague recollections of early childhood that remained with him had not been without their effect upon his character. They had sharpened his hatred of priestcraft; and, unconsciously to himself, they had been like an invisible fence guarding him from the contamination of fashionable vices.

But now an hour had come when they must be more—or nothing. Now was the time to avow his father's name, the traditions of his race. The opportunity was favourable,—the world would listen now. In the general curiosity and interest excited by the “*affaire Calas*,” Marmontel (or his successor as editor of the *Mercure*) would welcome a writer who could advocate the claims and explain the tenets of the persecuted sect. Voltaire himself would be flattered to receive a poetic epistle from one of its members, returning thanks for past, and soliciting future favours. But in order to describe, he must know; it would be necessary for him to renew his acquaintance with the scenes, the haunts, the friends of his childhood.

Why not? What could be more natural? And Gerard repeated the words, just then so familiar to his thoughts, “And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren and looked on their burdens.” There came back to him his mother's face—his sister's—their mountain cottage; the long moonlight walk to the place of Assembly, which once, and once only, he had been privileged to attend; the psalm chanted by a thousand voices; the preaching, dimly understood, but heard with reverent awe; the hymns and songs of martyrdom. And a great longing swept over his soul, as the wind sweeps the chords of an Eolian harp. It was the yearning of an exile for home, of a captive for liberty. Other words from De Sacy's page rose to his lips, as his heart began to thrill and glow with the enthusiasm of a generous purpose. “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.”

Could *he* say that? He could not even understand it. “Pleasures of sin,” “reproach of Christ”—the words conveyed no meaning to him. Yet they seemed to awaken old

associations, to bring back old lessons of right and wrong, and long-forgotten words of precept and of prayer.

Then there came a rebound—a revulsion of feeling—a pang of fear and apprehension—strong as the yearning had been. His life was full of “pleasures.” Every sense, every appetite was gratified. In his present abode, all was soft, fair, luxurious. And in Paris, there was the world of letters and of art ;—brilliant society, sparkling conversation, salons, operas, theatres, oratorios. Cold and bare in contrast looked the Cévenol mountains, and rigidly austere the lives of those who dwelt amongst them. Their creed too seemed narrow, gloomy, joyless. It was the creed of men whose home was *the Desert*. Should he return thither, his ideas and mode of life would strike his kinsfolk with horror, while theirs would cramp and petrify him.

He pictured, too, the contemptuous pity of his fashionable friends ; and, what he dreaded still more, the consternation of the Bairdons. His connection with the proscribed sect involved conditions sure to revolt and scandalize them, both upon religious and social grounds. It was hard enough that his origin was obscure, his name unknown ;—his father, whom he scarcely remembered, had been a poor artizan, a glass-maker, as he believed. But how would they endure the discovery that even that father’s humble name he had no legal right to bear, since probably there had not been in his family for generations a marriage or a baptism which the law would recognise ? No—he could not do it. For Griselle’s sake he must keep silence, at least for the present. By-and-by he would act the part of Moses, seek out the friends of his childhood, acknowledge his kinsfolk, and if it might be, aid in their deliverance. Moses waited, and so would he. He must first acquire a secure position in the court of the Egyptians, must become a power amongst them. How fortunate that Arboissère had pointed out to him, that very day, a road—so swift, so sure—to this desired consummation !

Yet he did not soon, or easily, reach a conclusion.

Sleep did not visit his eyes that night ; and many a bitter struggle had the old thoughts with the new ere the conflict was decided.

But the next day he kept his appointment with the abbé, and intimated that he had no objection to enter into a commercial speculation, provided it was safe, and likely to be remunerative. The abbé replied by naming, under the seal of secrecy, an august personage as partner in the concern. Gerard started—but he was well aware that since the brilliant speculations of the Scottish adventurer Law, the high nobility had largely indulged in a taste which partly resembled and partly replaced their former one for reckless and often dishonest gambling. Therefore he only bowed his head in due reverence, and said, with much more courtesy than truth, “Such a name is an abundant guarantee for the honourable character of the transactions.”

And then he lent himself to arrangements about the letters and interviews necessary for the prosecution of their scheme, which had in them an attractive savour of romance and mystery.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### IN THE WAITING-ROOM.

"It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

MONTHS passed on. Gerard's commercial speculation prospered, but at the expense of his true vocation. There have been poets, artists, musicians, who could so entirely separate the ideal and the actual in their lives, that the ideal could shine forth arrayed in "purple and gold and crimson, like the curtains of God's tabernacle," whilst the actual lay beneath their feet unlovely and unclean. Gerard, from temperament, was unable to do this. Moreover, his art was the only outlet and exponent left by his cold creed for his deeper and truer nature. It was really his religion. All those high and tender thoughts, all those hints and vague foreshadowings of

"God's holy mysteries  
Just on the outside of man's dream,"

which make the soul that believes in God look up to Him and pray, could only make Gerard "discourse sweet music"—no less sweet because it never wholly lost the undertone of sadness that confessed life an enigma without an answer. Therefore, when discord invaded Gerard's life, it forced its way into his art. No true inspiration could visit the spirit immersed in the current prices of grain, and continually occupied with the problem (little as he himself understood it then) of how much money hunger could extort in ex-

change for bread. Perhaps there was also an unacknowledged fear of breathing the breath of life into his creation, lest, like that of Frankenstein, it should turn upon its maker and rend him. Moses, the prophet of God, the deliverer of his people, too vividly felt and realised, might have blasted Gerard's commercial speculations with a breath, and driven him into the Desert, where his brethren dwelt, "to look upon their burdens." And with poet or artist, reserve is ruin. At his hands who will not give all, the Muse will accept nothing.

Gerard's oratorio, begun in December, received its double death-blow in March, from the plot of Arboissière and from the tragedy of Calas—from the *false* "merchant nobility" who were making him their tool, and from the *true*, who, with every other career jealously closed against them, yet maintained, in shop and counting-house, "a temper that shone with honour in the tumult or on the scaffold." His work, then drawing prosperously near its completion, began from that time to droop and languish; the delicate finishing touches, without which all must remain imperfect, could not be given.

"What is the matter with our nightingale, that he sings so seldom now?" asked his kind-hearted host; for he was still a not-unwilling prisoner in the splendid cage of Peltier.

"Moses will not come to me any more," Gerard answered sadly; then catching helplessly at the thought of the moment, and giving at the same time a sure indication of waning inspiration, "One sense might assist another. If now I could but *see* how Moses and Pharaoh looked!"

"A modest wish, M. Gerard! Yet it is possible I may help you. I cannot indeed have the honour of presenting you at the court of Pharaoh; but I might introduce you to a celebrated antiquary, who has made the ancient Egyptians one of his numerous studies—M. Gebelin de Court."

"Really? I have often heard of M. Gebelin. He it was of whom Mirabeau asked, half in irony, half in admira-

tion, ‘Will any one find us twenty men to carry out all the projects of Gebelin de Court?’”

“You will scarce think him a likely acquaintance for *me*. But the truth is, that some of these projects are practical,—for the relief of the poor and oppressed, and in such I have, occasionally, been able to assist. So I can give you a note of introduction.”

“I thank you, monsieur. I will go to Paris to-morrow and see him.”

He silently resolved that, at the same time, he would see others also, for tidings of whom his heart was yearning, and all the more because he had loyally obeyed M. Bairdon, and forbore any attempt at correspondence.

In the afternoon of the next day, he reached the modest dwelling of the savant, and presented the note of introduction with which he had been furnished.

He was admitted ; told that M. Gebelin would be disengaged shortly ; and ushered into a kind of waiting-room, which, as he noticed with surprise, looked far more like the office of a secretary of state than the study of a philosopher. Papers, writing materials, and formidable legal books, gave it an unmistakable air of business ; and two men—plainly dressed, like countrymen of the better class, but with a look of intelligence and education—stood near the window, talking. They glanced doubtfully at Gerard, and lowered their voices as he entered. But he had heard enough to know that the “affaire Calas” was under discussion ; and his mode of life tended to set him at ease in society of any kind. He addressed a courteous observation on the subject to the strangers, safely assuming that their sympathies were on the same side as his own.

They replied with equal courtesy, and one of them remarked, “Is it not strange, monsieur, to what an extent fanaticism can harden the heart of even a right-thinking and honourable man? Father Bourges, the Dominican who attended Calas to the end, and avowed his conviction of his innocence with a truly noble courage, has now become

the jailor and persecutor of the poor lad Pierre Calas, and is trying to induce him by threats and promises to abjure the Faith."

The expression "the Faith" struck Gerard as rather singular. But he answered, "What would you expect? He is a son of St. Dominic. In my opinion France could spare these black-coated ravens quite as well as their more audacious brethren of the Society of Jesus. And their hour will come. The world will not endure much longer the follies and abominations of priestcraft."

He stopped, surprised at the effect of his words. For both the strangers drew back, and stood looking at him with evident doubt and disapproval.

"I imagined I was speaking to philosophers," thought Gerard. "Who can these men be, and how can I possibly have offended them?"

They did not leave him in ignorance. "Young sir," the elder of the two said gravely, "allow an old man to remind you that 'the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God ;' and that the cause of 'the Evangel' cannot be promoted, and may be seriously injured, by such unseemly violence of language."

"The cause of *the Evangel?*" Gerard repeated in surprise. The term had been familiar once, but for fourteen long years had been unheard by him. "I have then the honour of addressing members of the Protestant communion?" he said. His companions were equally surprised. "If you are not one of us, monsieur," the younger observed, "your presence here must be a mistake."

"And yet no mistake," Gerard answered, laughing to hide his embarrassment. "Knowing M. Gebelin de Court by reputation as a very learned antiquarian, I ventured to hope he would lend me his valuable assistance upon a subject connected with his favourite studies."

"You should also know, monsieur, that M. Gebelin de Court is not only antiquarian, savant, philosopher; but also agent and protector of the oppressed Protestant

Church—as his heroic father, the venerable Antoine Court, was her champion and the restorer of her worship."

Antoine Court ! Again vague memories haunted Gerard, awakened by that name. He felt them vexatious, and was provoked with himself for the inadvertence which had aroused them. Had he not determined sedulously to avoid all that could recall his past? And now, like one walking in a dream, he had stepped unconsciously into the very midst of old associations. He ought to have known, at least, that Gebelin de Court was a Protestant. No doubt he had heard the circumstance mentioned ; but on account of the slight importance attached in his circle to religious distinctions, it had escaped his memory.

"In the society to which I belong," he said, "a man's creed is little regarded. We men of the world consider his character, and that alone."

"Does monsieur then imagine that a man's creed in no way influences his character?" asked the younger man—who yet was not young—fixing dark, intelligent eyes on Gerard's face.

"*That* I dare not affirm," Gerard answered. "But even if it does, toleration and benevolence will do more to commend a man's creed to his neighbours than proselytizing fanaticism. Not," he added frankly, "that *I* have any creed to propagate ; being, like most men of the world, what you would call an unbeliever."

"A sad confession, from lips so young," said the elder stranger.

"I am speaking to Protestants," Gerard returned, courteously. "Accustomed as you are, messieurs, to bow before the verdict of reason, I marvel that you have not brought to the bar of that judge a larger proportion of your traditional creed. Methinks other mysteries would share the fate of transubstantiation, if submitted to an equally searching and impartial scrutiny."

"The same reason which bids us reject the traditions of men, bids us receive, in all humility, the revelation of God," said the younger stranger steadily.

"The voice that says 'Reject' is audible enough," Gerard answered. "That which says 'Receive' needs keener ears than mine. But I should like to hear in what manner you think faith can vindicate herself at the bar of reason."

"By direct historical proofs; which all must acknowledge are at least so strong that if the facts on which Christianity is based had been indifferent to mankind they would never have been seriously questioned. By the manner in which those facts are related—true to each other in all their intricate relations, true to history, true to human nature and human life. By their many undesigned and undesignable coincidences. By the way in which those spiritual facts which we call doctrines arise out of them, are bound up with them, and are taught and confirmed by them. Most of all, by the words and the works, the life and the character, of Him who is at once the Revealer and the Revelation. By his words, which even His enemies are forced to call 'divine.' By His works, which stand out from the multitude of false and fabled miracles in their simple majesty, and in their divine restraint and economy of force. By His life and His character, which could as little have been the spontaneous growth of His age and circumstances, as the rough stone of the quarry could take the grace of the finished statue without the sculptor's hand,—as little the creation of human genius as the sun in yonder sky. Lastly, by the lives and characters of those who in all ages have acted and suffered through Him, and for Him. And by the love wherewith they have loved Him, which if He be not indeed 'alive for evermore,' and in constant living communion with their spirits, is an unexplained and unexplainable mystery."

"These words are significant," Gerard answered, after a long pause. "I will remember them."

He did remember them, all his life long; as a man struck blind by lightning remembers the last scene on which his eyes have looked ere their light is extinguished for ever.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### SORROW WITHOUT HOPE.

“O my light-bearer ! O my path-preparer !  
Gone from me, gone from me !  
I cannot kindle underneath the brow  
Of this new angel here that is not thou ;  
I am cold, I am slow !”

GERARD started as if awakened from a dream, when the door of the waiting-room was opened. There entered, not the long-expected Gebelin de Court, but a tall and slender youth clad in deep mourning. So greatly was Gustave Adolphe Bairdon changed by his long illness, by the thought it had awakened, and the sorrow that had followed it, that it took Gerard some moments to recognise, in the pale intellectual-looking young man, the sprightly mischievous urchin whose life he had saved two years ago. The deformity also was no longer noticeable, as Griselle had predicted.

But at last convinced that it was Gustave, Gerard sprang forward to embrace him. To his increased amazement, his former pupil and admirer drew back haughtily, and stood gazing at him, hatred and disdain written on his countenance. And before an explanation was possible, Gebelin de Court made his appearance.

The savant shook hands warmly with the two strangers, who appeared to be old and valued friends, and invited them into another apartment ; briefly excusing himself to “ces jeunes messieurs,” Gerard and Gustave, whom he

seemed to take for their companions. At another time Gerard would have noticed with interest that he called the younger of the two strangers M. Rabaut, a name not quite unknown to him. But it was evident that M. Pelletier's note of introduction had been overlooked, and before there was time for Gerard to make himself known, even had his agitation allowed him to do so, the door had closed again, and he stood alone with Gustave Adolphe Bairdon.

"What is the matter, Gustave? What has happened?" he questioned, more alarmed by the lad's mourning dress than surprised by his strangely repellent manner.

It might have saved untold sorrow if Gustave had but answered plainly, "Ere I came hither I had an interview with your friend Jules Prosper, and he told me that which changes my old love for you into scorn and hatred." But, though altered in much, some effects of his training in the maxims of the Jesuits were not yet eradicated from the character of Gustave. That "a straight line is the shortest way" is a lesson hard to learn at all if it be not learned in childhood. He answered with an air of hauteur, "Nothing that concerns you, monsieur."

"What has happened?" Gerard reiterated in an agony. "Speak, for Heaven's sake, Gustave! Do you not know how you torture me?"

But Gustave stood silent. Scorn and anger passed gradually from his face, and a deep sadness came instead. That look made Gerard's heart grow sick and faint. "Made-moiselle—your sister?" he faltered.

"My sister—is—*dead*," Gustave said, dropping the words slowly from scarce opened lips.

"*Dead?*"

"She is dead, M. Gerard."

"It is false!" cried Gerard, with white lips. "Do you dare tell me—" His utterance was choked, but he seized Gustave's arm, and unconsciously pressed it until a cry escaped the boy.

"Let me go," he said, struggling in that fierce grasp.

"What is it to *you*? You were not worthy of her; now you have lost her. I tell you again my sister is dead. Can't you see my dress?"

Gerard loosed his hold, looking himself like one wounded to death. But as a dying man automatically performs some accustomed movement, he murmured, "I beg your pardon," with a dim consciousness that he had inflicted pain. And before Gustave could answer or explain, he was gone and the door was closed behind him.

The business that brought Gustave to the house of Gebelin de Court was simple. It was merely to deliver into the hands of the protector of the Protestants a packet of letters, entrusted to him by a fellow-traveller who had shown him kindness on his journey. This was a service very frequently asked and rendered; nor was it by any means an unimportant one in days when the public post, as a mode of conveyance, was obviously unsafe.

But it was with a heart full of anxious misgiving that he returned to his home, a home now the abode of sorrow and mourning. "I have told *the truth*," he murmured to himself once and again. "Nothing but the truth. And well he deserves it. Let Mademoiselle de Lioncourt console him if she can. Scélérat!"

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE HOPE OF THE HOPELESS.

“Ewig ist das ganze Grün,  
Nur das Einzle welkt geschwind.”

A BOUT six months afterwards Désiré Gerard wrote thus to Jules Prosper :—

“PONTOISE, December 10, 1762.

“ You reproach me, dear Prosper, for having so long concealed my place of retreat from you and others. I could not help it, mon ami. Does not instinct teach even the wounded stag to go away from the herd and hide itself ?

“ Nevertheless, I am not altogether sorry you have discovered me. I can be brave now, and thank you for your goodness, your sympathy. Yet there are two things for which I am not brave enough, and therefore I entreat you, for love's sake, to urge them no more. Mine were not the tears of a child over a broken toy, to be dried by the promise of a new one. Bitter are the drops that well from the depths of a man's heart,—but I would not have them less bitter. Allow me, in this world, where all things change, to believe that *one* passion will last as long as the heart it feeds on.

“ And forbear to speak to me of my art. I hate music now ;—I fear it. It rouses that within me which I would fain lull to sleep for ever—that which, like the majestic form

of Israel's prophet in the strange old-world legend, rises with the awful voice, 'Wherefore hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?' Nay, Prosper, let the dead rest—if they can.

"And yet, my friend, I am better, much better. Nature is beneficent; she favours life. Maladies cure themselves, wounds close, broken limbs grow sound again. I feel this curative process begun already. I cannot enjoy, but I can live, for I have found something worth living for.

"But again, what do I say? Nature is beneficent, but only to a certain point. Maladies cure themselves—all but one—the last, for which there is no cure. And that comes to all. To some, in due season; to others, too soon. What does Nature care? Her children must take their chance. At best and farthest, her beneficence only extends so far as to give each that chance, that 'day' appointed to all living. When that is past come despair and death, the universal, the inevitable end. The leaf fades, falls, is swept away. What cares Nature? Her smiles are for the glories of the coming spring.

"I sometimes think there was an awful truth veiled under those weird fantastic stories of flowers that suffer, and shriek with human voices, when plucked by a thoughtless hand. We men are but leaves and flowers plucked by a heartless fate—call it Nature if you please. What avail the cries of anguish that swell the breeze? Nature laughs at them. No; I forget—Nature neither laughs nor weeps. She is blind, deaf, dumb—force without mind, without love. Death is lord of all things. Yet death itself is a name, an abstraction, nothing. At the heart of the universe there is—*Nothing*.

"Prosper, my friend, forgive me. I did not mean to write such words as these. Set them down as a cry of pain, forgotten as soon as uttered. For, believe me, I have found comfort. I think I see your incredulous start, your mocking smile, when you hear from what quarter it has come to me. But our oracle himself, M. de Voltaire, has

announced that 'all the world, weary of thinking about religion and politics, about letters and philosophy, has begun to think about corn.' And so have I. Why not? I am a little fragment of the world, a leaf in the great forest.

"A pamphlet of M. Turgot's, and one or two economic treatises into which I dipped of late, have opened my eyes, sealed too long by thoughtlessness and self-interest. This science is more interesting to me than even M. Buffon's splendid investigations into the animal world, because it has a present practical bearing upon the welfare of humanity. And, Prosper, the same sun warms, and the same blast shakes, all the leaves of the forest. If, being only leaves, it is their misfortune that they feel, let them at least feel each for the other.

"It is not pleasant to die—supremely unpleasant to die of hunger. Yet the continuous scarcity of corn, the frequent years of absolute famine, mean—death by starvation for thousands. Think of all that agony! Mothers hearing their children cry in vain for bread; strong men pining away with hunger; families scattered hopelessly; crime growing audacious, to be repressed with fresh cruelties. Ay, those who do not care to die of hunger may have their choice, and take instead the gibbet or the wheel.

"While all this misery can be prevented. I am not now going, with Jean Jacques Rousseau, to talk of the peasant 'hiding his wine for fear of the aides, and his corn for fear of the gabelle, and thinking himself ruined if any one imagines he is not dying of hunger.' There are worse evils in this realm than unfair and excessive taxation. And that evil in which I have been lately led, or misled, to take a share, is the worst of all. It is not less than a conspiracy to force up the price of grain for the royal benefit, and thus to starve the people. Need I say, Prosper, that I knew not what I did? I know all now, and, God helping me—(ah, what have I written?) The old accustomed meaningless words glide unawares from tongue and pen)—my own

strong heart helping me, since there is none else—I shall do right, though the heavens fall and crush me.

“Enough, perhaps too much. Burn this, as you love me, as soon as you have read it. I need not explain that I trust the hand that brings it as I trust my own soul.

“Adieu.

“Thine ever,

“DÉSIRÉ GERARD.

“P.S.—The friend who bears this tells me he saw M. and Madame Bairdon at St. Sulpice last Sunday, assisting at early mass. Both looked sad, and Madame Bairdon wore deepest mourning, as for a child of her own. I love her for it, Prosper.”

To this imprudent communication of Gerard's, Prosper returned a carefully-worded answer, very affectionate and very cautious. While warmly applauding the “benevolence and philanthropy” of his friend's sentiments, he took occasion to hint that private persons ought to think rather more than twice ere they spread reports to the disadvantage of those in high places. Did Gerard not remember the riots of '57? He would not for the world dissuade his friend from any course dictated by honour, but since Gerard had recently been studying De Sacy's Bible, he would venture to commend one passage to his particular attention : “Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought ; and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber : for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.”

Having thus discharged in the most exemplary manner the duties of friendship, Prosper added some of the current news of the gay Parisian world, signed, sealed, and directed his letter, and gave it to a person whom he trusted entirely, in order that it might be forwarded to Pontoise.

But his agent, finding that other business which he intended to transact in Pontoise could be managed equally well without leaving Paris, dishonestly evaded the journey, and betrayed both Prosper and Prosper's correspondent, by putting the letter in the post.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE NIGHT DEEPENS.

“All things grow sadder to thee, one by one.”

TILL hidden in his humble lodgings at Pontoise, Gerard was engaged one evening in the perusal of the last new brochure of the economic school, to which he was now altogether devoted, when his servant entered the room with an intimation that a gentleman from Paris wished to speak with him on particular business. “Let him come in,” said Gerard, with a hope that it might be Prosper, but a fear that it was only his confidential clerk, with whom an explanation on business matters could not be much longer avoided, and must be difficult and even hazardous.

Three men, fully armed, entered the room at once. One took his stand at the window, another near the door, while a third, who seemed of higher rank than the others, advanced towards Gerard, and showed him a paper, bearing a seal in yellow wax, and the signature of the minister of the king's household, Saint-Florentin.\* It was a *lettre de cachet*.

“Monsieur will be good enough to come with us quietly, for his own sake,” said the “exempt” of police. “He sees we have the means of compelling him, if necessary.”

Gerard started to his feet.

“Come with you?” he repeated. “Whither?—what do

\* Saint-Florentin is said to have signed the almost incredible number of fifty thousand *lettres de cachet* during his term of office.

you mean?" Then, as the full horror of his situation broke upon his mind, he grew pale and staggered. "What have I done?" he faltered.

"Monsieur, it is not my business to answer questions," the exempt replied, not uncourteously. "And the fewer you ask at present the better. But I am obliged to remove your books and papers. Have the goodness to point them out to me."

Gerard controlled himself, and obeyed mechanically, for he knew that concealment or subterfuge would now be worse than useless. But he could not help repeating, "What have I done? Of what am I accused?"

The exempt only answered by a warning look, and began to examine Gerard's property with deliberate care. Meantime the captive thought, despairing,—"I am doomed. I am to be flung into some dungeon, and left to die there—unknown, unpitied, unheard." Any tyranny was possible.

His strength, which had left him in the first moment of bewilderment, returned in a full tide, flashing through nerve and sinew. His room was on the "premier étage," and only one man stood by the window. In an instant he sprang upon him,—but in another he was struggling desperately with the three, who, watchful as lynxes, almost at his first movement had closed upon him. Against such odds even the strength of despair, of madness, availed not.

He was exhausted at last. One of the archers bound his hands, the other held a pistol to his breast; while the exempt himself, wearied out, entreated him to abandon a useless resistance. "We will not kill, and we dare not loose," he said to Gerard in a low voice.

But once convinced that his fate was inevitable, Gerard recovered outward composure. "Yes, I will go with you quietly," he said calmly, and even with dignity. "I suppose I shall be allowed the use of my books and clothing?"

"Probably you may. Now monsieur, if you please, we are ready." Gerard was led forth, and placed securely between the exempt and one of the archers in a carriage

which waited at the door. The other archer followed, with as much of his property as it seemed then convenient to remove.

The journey from Pontoise to Paris (about seven leagues) was accomplished rapidly, and almost in silence. Gerard, convinced that words were useless, only opened his lips to refuse an offer of refreshment. At length he saw, close at hand, the lights of the great city "flaring like a dreary dawn."

When they stopped at the Porte Saint-Denys the exempt gave the necessary pass-word, and then, leaning forward, whispered to the prisoner, "Give your parole, and I loose your bonds;" for he knew that the precautions his violence had rendered necessary would injure him in the eyes of his jailors. Gerard felt this generous considerateness, and the softened emotion it awakened sent a pang through his heart, frozen numb with its misery.

"I thank you, monsieur," he said, "and I willingly give my parole." There followed a rapid drive over the rough, uneven streets, a halt,—and a low, half-involuntary cry from the captive, "*This is the Bastille!*"

There was time for Gerard to collect his thoughts while the drawbridge was being lowered, and the proper application for admission made to the officer on guard, who had to bring it to the governor, to return with the keys, and to unlock the massive gate of the first court. Here Gerard was ordered to descend from the carriage, his sword was taken from him, and he was led across the court, over a second drawbridge, and through other gates, which were unlocked and unbarred before him with ominous noise of bolts and clanking of chains. At last he was brought to a large, dreary, unfurnished room, where he was duly delivered up by the officer on guard to a handsomely-dressed personage, whom he supposed to be the governor, or deputy-governor, of the Bastille, and who looked compassionate, but scarcely uttered a word. Two men, wearing the cross of St. Louis, advanced to search the prisoner.

He made neither complaint nor resistance now ; not even when his very clothing was taken from him, and he was forced to assume a mean and ragged dress, which had evidently belonged to some former captive. Finally he was led to his cell, in the fifth or highest story of the tower in which he then was, and which bore the inappropriate name of "La Liberté." It was a polygonal room, fifteen or sixteen feet in breadth, rather more in height ; and it contained a tolerable bed, with a coverlet and curtains of green serge, two or three chairs, a table, and a rude fireplace. Two thick, heavy doors were shut and bolted ; then Gerard was alone.

He flung himself on the ground, pressed his forehead against the planks that floored his cell, and gave himself up to an agony that knew no bounds, except the power of mind and body to sustain it.

A long, slow, living death, worse a thousand times than any steel or fire could inflict, was his prospect now. Hope of deliverance he had none. How he had awakened suspicion was a mystery to him ; but he knew that when his papers came to be examined, one writing would be found amongst them which would compromise him fearfully, the rough sketch of a pamphlet about the sale of corn, which he had intended to forward to some foreign country for publication. The revelations made there were crimes all the more certain to be visited with exemplary vengeance because no tribunal could take cognizance of them. Louis XV., and the noble duke who was his partner in trade, would take good care that a man who had such things to tell should never again find a human ear in which to breathe them.

He felt like a hunted creature brought to bay, knowing that all is over save the death agony. So "the malady for which there is no cure," the horror that lies in wait for all, had come to him,—too soon. How should he endure it?

If Gerard could have prayed, his prayer that hour would

have been for a swift and speedy death. He did cry aloud, "O God, let me die!" But he told himself this was only an instinctive cry of pain, meaning nothing, reaching no ear. He had said in his heart that there was no God. And the Humanity he had loved and worshipped could do nothing for him now. He was alone with his despair.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### A LITTLE LIGHT.

"To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth, to turn aside the right of a man before the face of the Most High, to subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approveth not."

TIME passed ; but Gerard kept no note of it. He cared not to know how many weary nights he lay awake, hearing every half-hour the sentinel's bell ; how many mornings he watched the slow dull light stealing through the barred *meurtrièr*e that formed his only window ; how often the turnkey came to him, standing silently within the second door of his cell, while with hasty hand he cut the provisions doled out to the captive, for knives were a forbidden luxury in the Bastille—not without reason.

No fire, no lamp was allowed him ; and the "glacial" atmosphere of the "cinquième étage" told upon frame and nerves, causing at first acute bodily suffering, then a numb, listless lethargy from which he never tried or cared to arouse himself. Often the visits of the turnkey awakened him from an uneasy slumber, often he found himself singing fragments of old songs, or even holding conversations with the absent or the dead, not knowing whether he was awake or sleeping.

At last one day the turnkey entered at an unusual hour, and bade him rise and follow him. He obeyed mechanically, still murmuring,—

"Il n'a plus rien à craindre,  
Ni rien à désirer."

"Hope that may be true for you, monsieur," the turnkey muttered, as they left the cell.

Gerard smiled. "Perhaps it is true already," he said. "Extremes meet."

He was led to the room where he had been at first received by the governor of the prison, and found himself once more in the presence of that gentleman. Another personage was there also, whom he already knew, M. de Sartines, "lieutenant of police." Great logs were blazing on the stones which served as a fire-place, and the momentary pleasure the sight afforded him was the first sensation of which he was conscious. He collected his thoughts however, bowed to the governor, then to M. de Sartines, and stood in silence awaiting their will.

"Monsieur," said the governor, "M. le lieutenant desires to interrogate you. I have no right to interfere, but as a friend I say to you, Tell the truth, it is the safest as well as the shortest course; but do not criminate yourself—you cannot be forced to do so."

The glance M. de Sartines bestowed upon his friend M. Abadie, governor of the Bastille, was not amicable. But it passed unnoticed by Gerard, in the great relief afforded him by the governor's words, which removed a dark dread that had often haunted his prison hours. Torture was still legal—might it not be employed in his case, as he knew it had been in those of others?\*

The interrogation began. Its character was inquisitorial. But Gerard's spirit rose, and his shattered energies revived with the strong necessity laid upon him. He had long ago resolved that, come what would, no other man should be injured by any admission drawn from him. But his hardest trial came when M. de Sartines showed him Prosper's letter, and required him to repeat the substance of his own, to which it was an answer. It was with difficulty that he repressed a start of surprise. In his ignorance whether his own letter had been destroyed or no, or what account of

\* This is a fact.

the matter had been obtained from Prosper, it was exceedingly hard to tell how much he ought to admit. He was closely and cleverly cross-questioned as to the occasion of Prosper's warning, "Curse not the king in thy thought, and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber;" but he held steadily to his first declaration, that he could not now recall the exact purport of a letter written months ago—that he supposed it might have contained some of those general reflections on the government which were the current topics in every society—but it chiefly concerned his own private affairs. And when Sartines continued his efforts to entangle or intimidate him into some further disclosure, he turned to bay. "Monsieur," he said, "my letter was harmless. Either you have the power to ascertain that fact for yourself, or you have not. If you have, it is useless to question me thus, for I can tell nothing you do not know already. If you have not, it is worse than useless; for it is base, being an effort to entrap me. I am guilty of no real offence against his Majesty, and I will not assist you in fixing an imaginary one upon me."

"You are over bold, monsieur," the lieutenant said; yet from that moment he conducted the examination with greater civility and consideration. At last the long ordeal was over. The two gentlemen withdrew; but Gerard was not at once remanded to his cell; though, rather to conform to the stringent rules of the prison than from any real necessity for such a precaution, a warder was stationed at the door of the room.

As soon as he was left alone, he drew a chair towards the fire and sat down. He tried to think over what had passed, but extreme weariness and the unaccustomed sense of physical comfort combined to overpower him, and he fell asleep.

He awoke with a start. M. Abadie was standing over him, compassion plainly written in every feature. No wonder Gerard's appearance touched the heart of a man of whom it is recorded that he retained a situation most

abhorrent to his nature, solely for the purpose of mitigating the sufferings of the unhappy prisoners committed to his charge. Worn, haggard, unshorn as Gerard was, the manly beauty of other days was not effaced ; the deep sunken eyes were full of fire and softness, while the wasted cheeks glowed with excitement, perhaps with fever. Nor could the infamous prison dress conceal the symmetry of the slight graceful figure. Gerard would have risen from his seat, but M. Abadie forbade him by a gesture, and, dismissing the warder, sat down beside him near the fire.

" My poor young friend," he said kindly, though with an air of reproach, " what can have tempted you to the folly you were guilty of just now ? "

" You think then, monsieur, that I spoke too boldly ? " said Gerard, looking alarmed.

" No. There is a kind of imprudence that is the perfection of prudence—sometimes, and with some men. But there was neither prudence nor common sense in giving yourself a false name."

" I did not do it, monsieur."

" How ?—you surprise me. All your friends know you as Désiré Gerard, and by no other name. Yet just now, in your examination, you styled yourself Gerard Grenier."

" M. de Sartines must know I have no purpose of concealment," Gerard answered wearily. " I gave him that name simply because it is my real one."

" Then how came you to have concealed it hitherto ? "

" The concealment was not deliberate, monsieur : it came about in this way. My father's name was Grenier, his native place the forest of Gabre, in Foix. But he was a Protestant, and being driven by persecution from his home, he found refuge with his brethren in the Faith, who inhabited the mountains of Languedoc. I scarcely remember him, for he died in my early childhood. When I was eight years old the dragoons entered our dwelling, tore me, a weeping child, from the arms of my mother and sister, and brought me to the Jesuits at Privas. They allowed me

to retain my true baptismal name of Gerard as a surname—they said I had no right to any other—but they baptized me in the church by the name of Désiré—which I renounce this day, as I renounce them—their faith and their works. Would I had had the manliness to do it years ago ! ”

“ You may renounce the Jesuits as much as you please, but you cannot renounce your baptismal name. However, your explanation is satisfactory. I shall give it to M. de Sartines, and enter you in our registers as Désiré Gerard Grenier. And now, M. Grenier, I have good news for you. I am permitted, at length, to soften your captivity, and to afford you certain indulgences which are, as I venture to hope, an earnest of further clemency on the part of his gracious Majesty.”

“ Monsieur, I thank you. But I do not need clemency. I have not offended.”

“ Remember, my young friend, that I am neither judge nor advocate. I am only head jailor—often a painful office. Not so to-day, however. I am permitted to grant you, conditionally of course upon your good behaviour, the promenade of the court.”

Gerard looked indifferent, though he murmured some grateful words. He did not feel strong enough to avail himself of the privilege; and the desire, once painfully intense, to look again on the sun and sky, seemed to have faded from him.

“ You may also have,” M. Abadie continued, “ the solace of a fire in your apartment.”

This favour was not received like the last. Weakened in mind and body as Gerard was, the warmth, the comfort, the sense of companionship seemed just what he needed. Perhaps, too, he thought of fires that shone upon friendly faces long ago—faces that he should see no more. He tried to return thanks, but his voice faltered—died away. “ I am ashamed of this weakness,” he said, after two or three unavailing efforts to speak. “ What a coward you must think me, monsieur ! ”

"M. Grenier," the governor answered, laying his hand kindly on his shoulder, "you are no coward, but as brave a man as I have ever met. I have watched your behaviour since you came here. You have suffered, and that keenly; but you have suffered in silence. Other prisoners are perpetually assailing the turnkeys with spoken, and me with written, complaints and remonstrances——"

"Ah, monsieur!" Gerard interrupted, whilst a grateful smile struggled through his gathering tears like sunshine through a mist, "if I had known what a compassionate heart was there to be appealed to, I—like others—would have tried my chance."

M. Abadie was perhaps not insensible to well-deserved praise. It was with an additional tone of kindness that he answered, "My orders were explicit. Until after your interrogation, I could do nothing for you. But allow me to add, that your deportment to-day confirms the opinion of your courage I have just expressed. Nor do I think you have injured your case with M. de Sartines; though, certainly, you went to the extreme verge of what was 'convenable.' But I come now to the most important of the favours I am empowered to grant you—you may obtain the services of an attendant, if you desire it."

"I have all the attendance I need, monsieur."

"But you would like a *companion*, no doubt? And this solace will be permitted you, upon the conditions always imposed in such cases. Your friends must supply the necessary expenses and find the man (subject to my approval, and to that of M. de Sartines); he will then be admitted to your cell, and allowed—nay, required—to remain there; for his imprisonment must last as long as yours."

Gerard raised his head, fixed his eyes earnestly on the compassionate face of the governor, and answered in a firm voice, "I will have no servant on such terms, monsieur."

"And why not, my friend?"

"Think you these long months have taught me nothing of the sweetness of freedom and the bitterness of captivity? Rather than bring a free man into this den of misery, I would lie down on my pallet and die alone to-night."

"Your words reveal a generous heart; and under other circumstances I would say you were right. But in the present case, monsieur, I advise you—emphatically advise you—to accept the offered grace." And M. Abadie accompanied his words with a glance full of meaning.

Gerard caught the look, but he was not yet convinced. "I have no friends to whom I should care to apply," he objected.

"Yes; you have friends, who are full of anxiety for your fate. And I am the bearer of an intimation from one of them—M. Pelletier, the Farmer-General—that if you will accept the services of a domestic, he is not only ready to provide the expenses, but has a suitable person in view, who is willing to undertake the office."

"Generous friend," thought Gerard. "I ought to beware of slighting his kindness. Moreover, there may be matters of the highest importance which he desires to communicate to me in this manner."

"Do you hesitate still?" asked the governor. "Well, I will add but one word more. I do not think M. Pelletier stands alone. There are persons of high consideration desirous of befriending you." Gerard felt all the significance of this hint. He had sometimes entertained a hope that the nobleman whose unacknowledged partner he had been, might interfere on his behalf; from fear of certain revelations he had it in his power to make, if from no worthier motive. It was possible that, in the present instance, Pelletier might be acting in concert with him.

"Monsieur," he said, after a pause, "I place entire confidence in your judgment and your kindness. Therefore, though not without reluctance, I accept the grace you offer."

" You will not repent it. Keep a brave heart, Monsieur Grenier. These gates, formidable as they look, are not those of Dante's Inferno, through which hope might not enter. And at worst, there is still heaven to hope for, God to trust in. Farewell." Having said thus, he rose and left the room, and Gerard was shortly afterwards led back to his cell.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE PRISONER'S SERVANT.

"Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel."

TWO beds instead of one, and a cheerful fire, changed the aspect of Gerard's prison-room considerably. But more than a week passed away before the second bed received an occupant. At last one morning the turnkey ushered in a young man, and laid on the floor a portmanteau, bearing traces of the rigorous search to which it had been subjected.

With unbounded amazement Gerard saw before him Gustave Adolphe Bairdon. He would have uttered a cry, but Gustave laid his finger on his lips, enjoining silence in the presence of the turnkey. "Surely," thought Gerard, "the poor lad must be—not the promised attendant—but a fellow-prisoner, consigned for some offence to this dismal place. What can he have done?"

"Hush!" said Gustave as the turnkey left the room. "Hush, M. Gerard! he is coming back again. I hope they have not broken the thing in pieces amongst them."

"What thing?" Gerard asked mechanically.

"Wait and see."

The turnkey presently came again, carrying something wrapped in green baize, which he laid down and withdrew. Gustave pulled off the covering and disclosed Gerard's harpsichord, a little the worse for the stringent examination

to which the Major of the Bastille had thought it necessary to submit so extraordinary an article.

Overpowering was the emotion the sight caused Gerard. All his past came back to him—dead hopes, dead joys, love that would not die—and bowing his head he wept long and passionately.

For a time his strange companion, apparently absorbed in the task of unpacking his portmanteau, did not seem to notice him. But at last he said, looking up, "M. Gerard, is this my welcome here?"

Gerard rose and embraced him, but tried in vain to speak.

Gustave received and returned the embrace, as though all recollection of their last singular interview were quite obliterated from his mind. "Remember, M. Gerard," he said, "I am no longer Gustave Adolphe Bairdon. I am Jacques Schopin, monsieur's most obedient servant, hired for him by his friend, M. Pelletier, at four louis a month and my food, including a bottle of good Burgundy every day. I would not bury myself in this dismal hole for a centime less, you understand," he added, with a critical glance around the room.

"Gustave, you overwhelm me," faltered Gerard. That this youth—cold, worldly, hardened as he had been wont to think him, accustomed to mock at noble sentiments, and to vaunt the selfish creed of Helvetius—should do for him, in his need, more than brother might have done for brother, or son for father! It touched him to the heart; it almost crushed him.

Meanwhile Gustave quietly returned to the portmanteau, which contained his own clothes and a few that he had been allowed to bring for Gerard. As he emptied it he sang to himself, in a low and very unmusical voice, a popular song of the hour.

"Gustave, my friend, I cannot understand this," Gerard said at length, coming to his side as he knelt on the floor, and laying his hand on his shoulder.

“—Parce que c’était affaire étrangère, étrangère—  
Parce que c’était affaire étrangère”—

Gustave still went on humming as he looked up, but Gerard saw that there were tears in his eyes. “Yes, M. Gerard, it *must* seem a strange affair to you. But trust and wait. There is one thing that I must say now, however. I owe you reparation for some unjust and cruel words, spoken under a misapprehension. M. Prosper deceived me,—but he is heartily sorry. He blames himself, moreover, for your imprisonment, and is moving heaven and earth to aid you. So are others. We all know the excellent Madame Geoffrin does not care to compromise herself, but in her own way she is not idle, and some of her clique are working hard for you. M. Marmontel, whose connection with the Marquis de Marigny\* might have been of use, is still in disgrace with the Court because he will not betray the confidence of a friend to gratify the petty spite of the Duc d’Aumont.† But there are others who have friends at Versailles, and even in the ‘petits appartements.’”

Gerard’s pale face flushed as he answered, “I hope my friends understand that I would rather die in prison than solicit my freedom from such as I should be ashamed to thank for it. But, Gustave, there are themes which interest me even more than my hopes of freedom. Your father, your mother?”

“They are well, M. Gerard, and it may comfort you to know that I come hither with their entire approval. My father has returned from Italy, having had quite enough of the rôle of ambassador between the Chevalier de St. George and his Italian friends. He does not say much; but, if I mistake not, he is convinced at last that the Stuarts have played their game and lost their stake. But it is hard; the cause was dear to his heart.”

\* The brother of Madame de Pompadour, who then governed France.

† A fact. Marmontel was actually sent to the Bastille, and deprived of the editorship of the *Mercure*, his chief means of support.

"And Madame Bairdon?"'

"Oh, she is well enough; but——" Gustave rose and went hastily to the fire, turning his back upon Gerard. Presently he said, "'Tis scarcely fair to ask a man to speak of his mother, when he knows he has not been the best of sons, and has just said farewell to her. Of course she feels the past. But, there, M. Gerard, not another word! I have to inform you that I have made a solemn vow, which I will thank you to respect, not to speak of my home, or of any of its inmates, for the space of three calendar months from this day."

"Oh, Gustave!" Gerard cried reproachfully. "While there is so much I long—nay, yearn—to hear, as a wounded man yearns for a cup of water in his agony! And ere three months are over, I may be—no doubt *shall be*—where no voice can reach my ear, were it even that sweetest voice of all, silent now for ever."

Gustave turned on him a face full of emotion. A struggle was taking place within; not until it was over did he speak, but when he spoke his voice was low and gentle: "My friend must trust me—for a little while. It is true I have never done much to deserve trust, but *you saved my life, M. Gerard.*"

"Your presence here gives you a right—" Gerard began, but the spasmodic cough produced by the prison chills interrupted his words.

The paroxysm left him exhausted. Gustave found a little wine remaining from his last meal, and gave it to him, saying, "We must apply to M. le Gouverneur for the physician."

"Oh no, it is over now. How strange it seems to be cared for, served—to think it matters to any one whether I live or die!"

"It matters to so many, M. Gerard, that you must make up your mind to live, at least out of 'benevolence and philanthropy.' Have the kindness to seat yourself here by the fire, and I will tell you, not certainly whatever you

may please to ask, but whatever it may do you good to hear."

Gerard took the chair Gustave placed for him, and the young attendant, kneeling beside him, began in an undertone, "Prosper's first intimation of your arrest was a domiciliary visit from one of the confidential agents of M. de Sartines. At first he was terrified, and no wonder; not knowing who was suspected, or of what. He was required to produce any writings of yours he had, and in particular all your letters. He tells me he gave the exempt the gratification of perusing half a score of billets, about appointments for parties of pleasure, and such trifles. But the officer, not satisfied, insisted upon having your letter from Pontoise. Prosper marvelled; till the truth suddenly occurred to him—his answer had been intercepted. But even had he been capable of betraying you, it was out of his power, as your letter, fortunately, was in ashes. Commanded to disclose its purport, he said for you the least dangerous things that occurred to him at the moment; and I am charged to tell you what he said, lest upon examination each should give the other the lie. Your friends have the key of the situation, through M. Pelletier, from the Abbé d'Arboissère. And they have agreed to save you if possible, at the expense of the noble duke under whom you have been acting; hinting that your indignation was aroused by witnessing the unscrupulous manner in which he enriched himself at the royal cost. This is not a hopeless, though a dangerous game. For his credit with the king is waning, and the most powerful person in the kingdom is his enemy. If, through her, his majesty can be brought to believe that your intended revelations touched his *agent's* honour, not his own, your prison doors may open yet."

Gerard sighed. "My friends are kind," he said; "but I fear their toil is useless. Even if the affair of the letter were smoothed over, there is the pamphlet."

"What pamphlet?"

"An unfinished pamphlet on the corn trade, which was seized with my other papers."

"Great interest is being made on your behalf with the royal censor, to whom your papers were consigned," Gustave answered. "And M. de Terew, like other men of the world, does not care to make 'the Philosophers' his enemies. He has burned his fingers already by his condemnation of 'L'Esprit,' and has been well laughed at for his pains. Moreover, there is no one concerned in the business, from M. de Terew himself to the archer who brought him your packets, who would not joyfully betray the king and all his interests, if he could do it with impunity. So we need not despair."

"No—not *despair*," Gerard said, with a gentleness born of patience rather than of hope. "Gustave, what did Prosper say to you and your present enterprise?" he resumed, after an interval.

Gustave smiled slightly, and something of its old expression passed over his face as he answered, "Nothing very flattering, M. Gerard. He said, 'Boys are always in extremes; and in these little minds the distance between one extreme and the other is not great. I ever guessed the precocious cynic of fifteen would do something absurdly Quixotic before he was twenty.'"

Gerard was surprised into a laugh, the first since he entered the Bastile.

As days wore on, Gustave proved himself a most thoughtful and efficient attendant. When the weather grew mild and warm, he urged Gerard to accept the offered boon of an hour's daily exercise in the court. This, however, was not an enlivening pastime; no two prisoners might enjoy it at the same time, and if a chance visitor, or even a workman employed about the fortress, crossed the court during the hour, the captive was obliged to hide himself in a small dark sentry-box erected for the purpose; on no account must his features be recognised.

Nothing met his view except the high towers and massive

walls of his dungeon, and the patch of sky that even these could not altogether shut out. The very clock, which stood facing the court, seemed designed, like everything else, to remind him of his misery. Chains, curiously intertwined, encircled its dial, and two figures, chained together by the neck, the waist, the feet, adorned it.

Gerard's strength was usually exhausted long before the turnkey, who always accompanied him, announced the termination of his hour of exercise; but the consequent weariness procured him at least sounder slumbers. Another grace, offered him about this time, he respectfully declined. He had no desire to attend mass in the prison chapel, which was so arranged that the small number of prisoners who enjoyed this valued boon could see the priest as he elevated the host, and nothing else. But Gustave requested that he himself might be permitted to attend, and the request was granted immediately. Gerard was surprised, though he had noticed that every night and morning Gustave knelt beside his pallet for the space of a Pater-noster or two.

"Do you really care for that mummery?" he asked one day, when Gustave had been led back to the cell and locked in with quite as much precaution as though he had been himself a criminal.

"Oh, it is amusing," Gustave answered with a yawn. Then evidently reproaching himself for a frivolity that was merely assumed,—"The fact is, M. Gerard, I have not made up my mind yet upon some matters. But while I am trying to find out whether the King has or has not given certain commands, I think it best, on the whole, to be found obeying."

"If once you believe that the King is, Gustave."

Gustave did not answer for a few moments. Then he said, "There was a good story of that witty little Abbé Galiani, whom you used to meet at Madame Geoffrin's dinners, current in the city at the time I came into retreat here."

"What was that?"

"One day your fine friends of the clique Holbachique were talking atheism, according to their wont, at the table of M. d'Holbach. The 'pretty little abbé,' as they call him, heard them to the end in silence, being the only one there of a contrary opinion. But as they were about to separate, he promised that if they would meet there the next Tuesday at dinner, he would answer and refute them all. The hour being come, and the men, our little abbé seated himself, tailor fashion, in an arm-chair, took off his wig, swung it in one hand, gesticulated with the other, and began,—'I will imagine, messieurs, that he among you who is most convinced the world is the result of chance is playing at dice, I do not say in a gambling-house, but in the best house in Paris, and that his antagonist throws—once, twice, three times, four times, every time, in fact—double sixes. Before the game had lasted very long, my friend Diderot, who would thus lose his money, would say, without hesitation, without a moment's doubt, "The dice are loaded, I am swindled!" Ah, philosophers! Because ten or twelve times in succession the dice happened to fall in such a way that you lose a five-franc piece, you would firmly believe that it was a cunning trick, a concealed swindle; and yet, seeing in this universe such a prodigious number of combinations, ten thousand times more complicated, more continuous, and more useful, you do not suspect that nature's dice are also loaded, and there is a grand Rogue above who is laughing at you all.'"

Gerard shuddered.

"Terrible," he said; "and, perhaps, *true*."

"True? yes. Terrible? I don't know. Man *is* great, wise, and strong, yet withal scarcely fit to be king of the universe. I have long thought that in his heart of hearts he suspects as much, that he knows very well he is not strong enough for the place, and would thank a kind fate to depose him, and give him a master."

A half-stifled cry of pain and desolation broke unawares from the lips of Gerard.

" You speak truth, sad truth," he said. " I dread torture more than most men, yet I think no torture could have been so horrible as the anguish I have passed through since I entered this place,—ay, and before it. The dreary thought that I was alone—the void, the emptiness everywhere ! The sense that in that emptiness my voice died away unheard—that no one, in earth or heaven, knew or cared for the agonies of my breaking heart ! Often would I have given my life to touch a living hand in that darkness, even though it were raised to strike me. ' God is angry ' is less terrible than ' God is not.' "

" Then," said Gustave, very gravely and thoughtfully, " M. Galiani may be right so far as this—what happens to us is not chance, but the will of a Being stronger and greater than we."

" Softly, my friend. May we not be the sport of powerful but unconscious elemental forces ? Wind and fire are stronger than we, but they have neither mind nor will."

" True ; but if yonder fire made a piece of iron into a file, I should say there was mind directing its force, and if the file was made for us when we wanted it, I should say there was will also. And good-will to us, moreover."

" ' Peace and good-will to man.' Those are the words of some old chant or hymn, I think," Gerard murmured dreamily.

Gustave's eyes glistened as he saw the direction Gerard's thoughts were taking. He brought him the harpsichord, untouched till now.

" I am sure you remember the air, M. Gerard," he said ; " I should like so much to hear it."

Gerard could not resist the appeal ; and the instrument once touched, he played over several airs, principally chants, hymns, and fragments of Masses.

" How beautiful they are !" said Gustave. " Pray go on, M. Gerard, if it does not tire you."

" Tire me ? Oh no. But *you* were not wont to care for music, Gustave." He raised his eyes, and fixed them

on the face of his companion. "I see it all, you think it comforts me," he said. Then suddenly rising from his seat, he threw his arms round his neck and drew him close to him. "Gustave, Gustave ! why have you done all this for me ? Your love is sweet, most sweet to me. But the pang it brings is agonizing. For *my* sake you are doomed to languish here, a captive, in the bright morning of your days, shut out from life, hope, love. Gustave, when I look on you, I wish to die, since my death would set you free."

"I was sent here, M. Gerard, that you might not die, but live."

"Was sent ? Nay, you *came*."

Gustave's voice sank to a whisper as he answered, "Love unseen is oftentimes the strongest love of all. Did I see you in the crowd the day you rushed under the horses' hoofs to save me ? And afterwards, when I forsook my home a lost wanderer, did I see the love that followed me ? Did I dream that one whom I had scorned and mocked would seek me, find me—ay, die for me—because he loved me ? Those were his own words, M. Gerard. And perhaps also there is love unseen watching over you. Perhaps I have been sent here to prove it. Perhaps all this time there is One above, not 'laughing at' us, but loving us. And perhaps—who knows?—that old tale *is* true, and He has sent his Son to prove it."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### GUSTAVE LOOSED FROM HIS VOW.

“ Every cloud that spreads above,  
And veileth love, itself is love.”

LONG as it had been before Gerard dared to awaken the slumbering echoes of memory by touching his beloved instrument, it was only the first step which proved difficult. That taken, he knew not how to enjoy sufficiently a solace so delicious. Many times in the day did the gloomy tower resound with the tones of sweet melodies, sometimes remembered, sometimes improvised.

He had passed now beyond that fearful shrinking from his art which, in the days of his first sorrow, he described to Prosper—perhaps the emotions dreaded then were even longed for now. There were themes and associations, however, which he still sedulously avoided; especially everything that could recall his unfinished oratorio—“ Moses the Deliverer.”

One evening, during the twilight, he played melody after melody, as if in a dream. At last he glided into a light, airy, fanciful piece, of which he had not thought for years. It was exquisitely beautiful, perhaps more full of genius than anything he had since composed; even Gustave was arrested, fascinated,—he asked the name. “ Torn Lace,” Gerard murmured in reply. But the memories awakened rose suddenly like a tide, and veiling his face in his hands, he wept.

Gustave came gently to his side. "M. Gerard," he said, "do you know how long it is to-day since I entered this place?"

Gerard tried to grow calm again. "No, indeed, Gustave," he said. "No, indeed; I can't tell. There is nothing here to mark time. Though you may well remind me that when *you* go on, day after day, bearing all so uncomplainingly, I ought to be ashamed of these tears. But, Gustave, you have never—*loved*."

"That may be, M. Gerard. Were it otherwise, I suppose I should not tell you with so much composure that this day I have been in the Bastille three calendar months."

Gerard sighed. "Ah! how long must this last—how long? I thought my death would have broken your chains ere now. But deliverance seems no nearer to-day than when you first came."

"Deliverance, of that kind, seems a good deal farther off. Life, not death, is before you, M. Gerard. And since we may look forward to days to come, we can dare to talk of days gone by. Bear with me now, for I am going to reproach you. Granted that when I met you last summer in the house of M. Gebelin de Court, I spoke to you with bitterness, even with cruelty; was not what I told you of sufficient importance to have made you desire and seek more precise information?"

Gerard trembled, and his colour came and went rapidly. "I did," he said, faintly. "But to approach the Rue Béthizy was—impossible."

"That comes of being a genius. An ordinary man, without music in his soul, would have known how to save himself months of misery. But had you no other means of gaining information about us?"

"Yes, and I used them. I sought the kind old priest your godfather, but heard that he too was at rest; cut off, as it appeared, during a journey taken about your family affairs, and by the same malignant fever that—Gustave, if indeed you have any message, any word, for me, I pray

you tell it now. It will give me strength and comfort such as you dream not." He rose and stood facing Gustave, with flushed cheek and throbbing heart.

"I have a message for you, from dying lips, but not from those of my sister Griselle," Gustave answered; and it was the first time that name had thrilled the air of the gloomy prison. "Sit down, M. Gerard, and listen. Be patient with me, for I have a confession to make, as well as a message to deliver. The day we met at M. Gebelin's my heart was bitter against you. Prosper had just come to my mother's shop—you may be sure, after the past, I would not have sought him out; in fact, I was ashamed to face him. But he watched for me, spoke to me, and talked of you. In fine, he told me you were about to marry a young lady of noble birth, Mademoiselle Zélie de Lioncourt."

"False, foul slander!" Gerard cried passionately. "But what matters all that now? Let it be—and tell me what I long to hear."

"Patience, M. Gerard; the confession comes before the message. I dare say M. Prosper himself believed what he told me, because he wished it true. I at least believed him. I determined to save a sister, whom I dearly loved, from being the dupe and the plaything of one I believed a hypocrite and traitor. One pain, I thought, is less hard to bear than ten thousand. Forgive me, M. Gerard; I know better now."

"But then—then—she was beyond all pain," said Gerard with deep emotion.

"She was *not*. I told you my sister was dead, and I said the truth, but—"

"Oh, Gustave! must I think that she had heard—that she *believed* that cruel lie?" cried Gerard, and covering his face with his hands he groaned aloud.

"Have patience,—dear friend, have patience. No; you must not think that she believes that."

"*Believes?*—Oh, if we but knew that they who are

gone from us still believe, feel, love—if we had but hope of meeting beyond the grave ! ”

“ There is hope of meeting on this side of the grave,” said Gustave, in a slow, deliberate voice, though the hand he laid upon Gerard’s was cold and trembling. “ Listen, M. Gerard—I had *two* sisters.”

Gerard flung his hand aside and gazed into his face, all his soul in his eyes.

Again Gustave spoke slowly, and in low constrained tones, “ My little sister Valérie sleeps in Père la Chaise. Griselle lives still,—and loves you.”

He was barely strong enough to sustain the weight of Gerard, who fell fainting into his arms. “ Have I been hasty, after all ? ” he thought as he laid his unconscious burden down. “ O God, help me to save him—for Griselle ! ”

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### ANOTHER WANDERER FOUND.

"Thou livest, thou livest, thou'rt mine ;  
In that glad thought I make my heart a shrine,  
And by the lamp that quenchless there shall burn,  
Sit a lone watcher for the day's return."

THE hot air of the midsummer night (it was mid-summer now) stole through the narrow *meurtrièr*e, and touched the pale brow of Gerard as at last he slept, the sleep of utter exhaustion. Gustave sat near him ; a worthless romance from the prison library in his hands, and his thoughts far away.

Three half-hour bells had the sentinel rung, unheard by Gerard. At the fourth he started,—wakened fully in an instant, as one does under the influence of strong emotion,—raised himself, and looked at Gustave.

Gustave administered some of the "good Burgundy" claimed for his own consumption, but generally kept for his friend. "Do you feel better now, M. Gerard?" he asked.

"Better? Oh yes. Only it seems strange to be glad and rejoice within these walls."

"When God sends joy, He means us to rejoice," Gustave said.

"Yes; and I *do*, Gustave. She lives, sees the sun, treads the flowers beneath her feet. She thinks, feels, enjoys. Gustave, I shall do nothing day and night but say over and over again, 'She lives.' Why keep this joy from me for three long weary months?"

"Had I told you at first, it would have killed you."

"Well, I am sure you have done it for the best, Gustave. I suffered—and deserved to suffer.' I might have saved myself all that anguish, unuttered and unutterable. I might now have been—not here, but—— Gustave, from the moment I heard your tidings I was myself no longer. Heart and brain were smitten unto death—a living death, that left the power of suffering, but paralyzed the powers of thought and action. I fled from Paris, as though I could flee from misery—I buried myself in an obscure retreat, where I lay stunned and helpless, until the cry of a famine-stricken people reached my ear and roused me from my trance of selfish sorrow. But now, Gustave, tell me more."

Then, in the darkness, Gustave retraced the story of his own wrong-doing. Gerard already knew it in part from Prosper; and judging it no slight penance to Gustave to recall it, he would have stayed him. But he said, "No, M. Gerard; I have done the wrong, and I must bear the pain. We have been very hard, we *philosophers* [he emphasized the word with irony], upon the Holy Catholic Church, yet one good thing at least should be said for her.' She has kept alive in humanity the sense of sin, the belief in law, and in the pain that follows its transgression. Could I forget, though I had lived a hundred years, that my folly, my waywardness, my *sin*, have cost the life of the best, the noblest man I have ever known?"

"It does seem that Retribution is a truth,—a terrible truth,—and that what is done is irretrievable," said Gerard sadly. "But, Gustave, I have heard M. Goudin speak of the awfulness and mystery of death. Gladly would I know how it was with him when he saw it face to face."

"It was singular, was it not?" Gustave answered, "that the rites upon which Catholics place so much dependence at that hour should have been denied him, who had served the Catholic Church so faithfully. The Curé d'Escouey, one of those who, like Louis XIV.,\* think a Jansenist worse than

\* A fact. Saint-Simon gives a singular instance of it.

an atheist, was he who thus insulted the last hours of a better man than himself. We would have sought another priest, but there was none at hand ; though, afterwards, the curé of the next parish did all he could for us, and my dear god-father was laid with due reverence in consecrated ground. The act of the Curé d'Escouey was not only cruel, but illegal, and he is likely to suffer for it. The affair has attracted some attention, and people are finding out now that the obscure officiating deacon of St. André was an eminently holy man—‘ His works do follow him.’ ”

“ I had rather know how he died than how he lived,” said Gerard gently.

“ He did not *die*,—he went to One he loved, joyfully as you and I would leave this dungeon, if we could, to-night.”

There was a pause, then Gerard said again, “Would that I could learn his secret ! Often I have greatly longed to be at rest—in the grave. But ‘ death is terrible and nature’s horror.’ ”

“ You may learn his secret, M. Gerard. The message I have to give from dying lips is his. Griselle was charged with it, and has given the charge to me. ‘ Tell M. Gerard this,’ my godfather said,—‘ where I stand now all is real. What *seems* has passed away for ever, only what *is* remains. I stand alone, face to face with death. Yet not alone. God *is*, and Christ. His life is real as the death He came to conquer, His redemption sure, as the decay of this mortal frame.’ ”

In the long silence that followed the sentinel’s bell rang out once more. Then Gerard asked, “Gustave—do *you* believe it ?”

“ I have been loved even unto death, and so I believe in love unto death,” Gustave answered.

“ If true, why hidden, doubtful-seeming, hard to find ?”

“ Why hidden from me I know,” Gustave said. “ The word is true, ‘Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent’ (in their own sight), ‘and hast revealed them unto

babes.' That which my godfather asked for me was the child's heart. But *you*!"

There was no answer. A long silence followed, broken suddenly by Gerard, who exclaimed, "How strangely selfish I have become! Allowing you to sit beside me the whole night through. Go and rest, dear friend."

"There's time enough to rest. I may sleep all day if I will. See, M. Gerard, it is dawn. The world outside grows full of light. Light is stealing in, even here." And again there was silence. By-and-by Gerard raised his head, and said softly, "If I speak, will He hear, Gustave?"

"Try, M. Gerard," Gustave answered.

"But he that cometh to Him 'must believe that He is,'" murmured Gerard, who was very familiar with *that* page of De Sacy's Bible.

The words of Goudin—the words spoken by the pastor in Gebelin de Court's waiting-room—other words, more sacred, forgotten or disregarded for long years—came crowding back upon his mind. What for months had been slowly growing and deepening there—"in the purple twilight under the sea" of conscious thought—sprang forth into the light, and ripened in an hour.

Meanwhile the world without was rejoicing in the great glow and glory of the sunrise. One red ray struggled through the barred *meurtrièr*e, bearing a message of life and hope into the dreary prison-room. But Gerard lay still, not even a movement of the hand, a quiver of the eyelid, betrayed that he felt or knew what passed around. At last came words—low quiet words—spoken slowly and as if from a far distance:—

"HE IS! Not dumb Fate; not blind Chance; not personified Nature; but the living and true God. The Father who creates, who loves and cares for the work of His hands. The Spirit who breathes over the created, and brings them into communion with the Creator. The Son, Divine and Human, the man Christ Jesus, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven!"

Then, after a pause, and with stronger utterance, "Oh ! the joy of finding at the heart of the universe a living, loving yes, instead of 'a dreary no !' Instead of blank nothingness, an Eye that meets, a Hand that touches mine ! The secret of all things is unveiled at last, their dread enigma solved. And the answer is not Death but Life—the living Word, the Christ of God. Were this little spark of my life to be quenched this day, I should die rejoicing that such transcendent glory and beauty, such love unutterable, such help and hope for Humanity, is no fable, but truest truth. I should die, thanking God that Christ lives !"

At a later hour that morning the gloomy tower of "La Liberté" echoed the tones of a song in which two voices mingled—one rich, sweet, melodious, the other scarcely more than a tuneless murmur,—

"Te Deum laudamus : Te Dominum confitemur.  
Te æternum Patrem omnis terra veneratur.  
Tibi omnes angeli, tibi cœli, et universæ potestates,  
Tibi cherubim et seraphim, incessibili voce proclamant,  
Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth,  
Pleni sunt cœli et terræ majestate gloriæ tuæ."

## C H A P T E R   X X V.

### TO BE FORGOTTEN.

“ And over thee the suns arise and set,  
And the lark sings, the sweet stars come and go,  
And men are at their markets, in their fields,  
And woo their loves, and have forgotten thee.”

WHILST Gerard’s tried spirit was thus struggling towards the light, he was unconsciously causing no little embarrassment both to friends and foes outside the walls of his prison. He was not a solitary victim to the honourable ambition of unveiling the guilty mysteries of the “*Pacte de la Famine*” for the public benefit. Three others, suspected of attempting the crime that he had merely contemplated, were doomed to languish in the dungeons of Vincennes until the death of the tyrant set them at liberty. For such transgression there was no forgiveness. The doom that awaited the transgressor was that most terrible doom of all —to be forgotten.

But in Gerard’s case that doom was not easy of execution. For he was a disciple and protégé of the philosophers, and the philosophers had good memories. Louis XV. was afraid of the philosophers, and hated them proportionately. Most gladly would he have immured “all *that*,” as he contemptuously styled the whole class, in the dungeons of the Bastille, but this was impossible. His power was waning, whilst theirs, though unrecognised, was great, and growing greater every day. He might, and did, exasperate them by petty persecution; he could not crush them. He had to

learn at last—he learned it very slowly—that the wasps were armed with stings, and could use them when provoked.

Kingcraft is a difficult art, requiring much adroitness in the exercise, else a very slight inadvertence may ruin an elaborate design. In Gerard's case more than one blunder had been committed, but the most damaging was the examination of Prosper by the agent of M. de Sartines, which revealed the victim's situation to his friends. The affair was still further complicated by the interference of Gerard's noble patron (as he considered himself), who, justly afraid of the revelations a too stringent investigation might elicit, used his influence on behalf of the prisoner with a pertinacity which irritated the king, though it failed to move him from his purpose.

Gerard's death would in all likelihood have solved the problem, much to the king's satisfaction, had not M. Abadie been governor of the Bastille, and had not M. de Sartines enjoyed the friendship of several distinguished philosophers, whom he did not care to disoblige by refusing the captive permission to keep a servant. It is true he might suspect this servant was more than he seemed to be; but it was scarcely worth his while to raise objections, at the risk of excluding himself from two or three of the best houses in Paris, and adding to his already unpleasant notoriety by becoming the hero of a few more lampoons and street songs.

But if Gerard must live, there was at least one alternative. He could be sent to some obscure and distant prison in the provinces. There, far more easily than in Paris, he might be forgotten. The very reputation of being “in the Bastille” kept alive curiosity, interest, sympathy—nay, it almost surrounded the victim with a halo of sad romance. But an indefinitely prolonged “retreat” in some far-away monastery would have no such effect; it would combine the appearance of clemency with the reality of stern and silent durance; and eventually Gerard's name and his wrongs would cease to be remembered, even by the philosophers.

One dark and rainy autumn night Gerard and his companion were aroused from sleep, and desired to prepare for a journey. Gerard obeyed with the resigned, almost cheerful, tranquillity that had come over him of late, while Gustave was heard to mutter, as his active hands hastily packed their few possessions, "At least they can't send us to a worse place."

The Major of the Bastille met them at the foot of the staircase, and led them, with great mystery, across the court and through the numerous doors. They were left a little while in the guard-room near the outer gate; and there M. Abadie himself came to them with kindly words of cheer and farewell. The question whither they were being taken he did not answer, because he could not; but he put into the hands of Gerard a small but very weighty parcel, which, he said, had been sent to him by his friends. "It is better you should not open it until you reach your journey's end," he added; "I have examined it, and placed upon it the seal of the Bastille. This, as long as it remains unopened, secures it from further scrutiny. But the seal once broken, it may be examined afresh at every stage, to the probable injury of the contents."

Gustave's eyes glistened as he relieved his "master" of the burden. "Gold, I warrant me, by the weight of it," he thought. "Only one thing would be more valuable to us—*iron*."

Meanwhile Gerard thanked M. Abadie, with real emotion, for the many acts of kindness he had received from him. "God," he said, "who hears the sighing of his prisoners, will reward you, who are doing his work so nobly in this abode of sorrow."

Few more words were spoken. Gerard and Gustave were conducted to a close carriage, an exempt occupying the front seat beside Gerard, and a musketeer guarding Gustave, while another sat outside. Thus accompanied, they went forth into the darkness—to be forgotten.

A thick veil of oblivion fell and hid them like a pall.

Days, months, years, might roll away, and no letter, no message, reach them from the outer world, or come back again to the world from that mysterious "land of darkness, as darkness itself," whither they had gone to dwell. The grave was scarcely more absolute in its solitude and its separation from the ties and interests of humanity. Only, even still, "with all the living there is hope."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

NUMÉRO 18, RUE BÉTHIZY.

“ Sometimes one moment can repay  
Unnumbered years of pain.”

A GAIN it was the Fête-Dieu ; and the gayest city of the world wore its gayest adornment of flowers, wreaths, and tapestry. No. 18, Rue Béthizy, did not look outwardly less gay than its neighbours, though there was little festivity within. M. Bairdon had taken his son Henri—now a fine boy of twelve—to see the decorations of the city ; the servants were out, keeping holiday ; only Madame Bairdon and Griselle remained at home. They sat in the parlour ; Madame Bairdon showing respect for the day by reading a book of devotion, Griselle reading also. Care and sorrow had touched her face, not to mar, but to refine and consecrate. The soft bloom of early youth had passed, the pure and finished grace of perfect womanhood had come instead. The fair hair, golden as ever, was bound simply back from the pale broad forehead ; and the deep soft eyes looked more large, more full, more blue, because the cheek was less round, and its blush less rosy.

Madame Bairdon’s good-humoured face also showed traces of anxious days and nights. She presently remarked, looking up from her book, far more willingly than she would have done from a manual occupation, “ I forgot our lodgers were at home. I think I hear their footsteps.”

“ I believe their valet has gone out,” Griselle answered.  
“ But the English ‘ milord ’ himself and his tutor are within.”

"I wonder they do not go and see the city, such a day as this," said Madame Bairdon. "Especially as they are strangers. Are we not fortunate in getting such distinguished lodgers, Griselle? Englishmen, it is true, are plenty enough here since the Peace, but English milords will never be too plenty anywhere. I am quite curious to see what ours is like. As yet I have only seen the valet, who engaged the lodgings for them. It was quite dark when they came last night. Margot, who helped the valet to carry up milord's baggage, and saw his face in the lamplight, says he looks very delicate, poor young gentleman!"

They relapsed into silence, which Griselle broke, though with a little hesitation, "Chère maman," she said, "do you remember this day five years?"

Madame Bairdon did remember, only too well; but she was one of those who find it hard, and almost think it wrong, to speak of past sorrows. "Ah, how things are changed since then!" she sighed. "Of those who sat around our table, the Sunday after, just half are lost to us. Griselle, m'amie, my heart does not ache for the two who are in their graves, as it aches for those of whom we know not whether they live or die. It is hard for thee, child, to waste thy youth, and wear thy life away, for one of whom the best we hope to hear is the death of hope itself!"

"Not *hard*," Griselle answered. "He is good and noble—he suffers for no crime, but for a generous purpose. And he lives, or we should know it. Gustave would have come back to us. Our dear, brave Gustave! He is a true hero."

"Who would have thought so much of my poor Gustave, incomprehensible boy that he was? That he, who mocked generous words and sentiments, should straightway go and do generous deeds! It was love—the love he bore to Gerard and to thee."

"Mother, the generous love was yours too," said Griselle in a low voice. "You have given, for me and mine, as much as any one on earth could give—a firstborn son."

Madame Bairdon stooped and kissed her.

“Tais-toi, ma fille,” she murmured. “The boy must needs have his way. And, truth to tell, I had rather have him in the Bastille—or wherever else he may be—doing his devoir like his father’s son, than have had him become, as he was like to do, a little foolish-wise philosopher, full of his own conceit, denying the good God, and scorning his neighbours. Ma foi, that sort of thing is not—*convenable!*”

“I pray night and day——” Griselle began, and stopped.

“And I, if I am ever so busy, manage to say a Pater-noster—one for him, and another for M. Gerard. Do you remember how our little Valérie used to pray for M. Gerard? The dear little one loved him well.”

“She was wise beyond her years, as children often are whom God would take,” said Griselle.

“Ah, you taught her prayers and verses, and stories of our Lord and the saints. I was always so busy,” said Madame Bairdon with a sigh, thinking perhaps of treasures she had overlooked, in her keen pursuit of the tangible rewards of diligence in business. ‘Though these too had been sought for her children’s sake.

“She and Henri learned much in those quiet Sunday afternoons, from dear Father Goudin. How often she thought of your promise that he should prepare her for her first communion, and talked of it, even in her wanderings, near the end! Perhaps, indeed, he *did* prepare her for that communion, which was to be her first, where the little ones do alway behold the face of the Father.”

“Ah! I wish we were all prepared as my little Valérie for our last hour! But one must belong to this world while one is in it. Yet we cannot live in it for ever; nor take the best ‘point de Paris’ with us out of it.”

“Hush, maman!—listen!” Griselle rather breathed than spoke, as she raised her hand gently, and a look at once of exquisite pleasure and of intense emotion passed across her face.

“Our lodgers are entertaining themselves with a little

music," said Madame Bairdon. "And very good music too."

The music *was* good,—but there was that in its tones which Madame Bairdon failed to hear, though Griselle heard. She could not speak; tears gathered slowly in her eyes, and at last overflowed them.

For a time they sat in silence, listening. And then, chanted clearly enough to reach their ears, came words—words that thrilled the heart of Griselle to its core.

"C'est à Dieu mon Père  
Que j'élève mon cœur;  
En Lui mon âme espère  
D'une constante ardeur."

"Oh, mother—mother!" she cried, trembling from head to foot. "Don't you remember, mother?"

"Hush, my daughter, they have finished. And I hear footsteps; some one descends the stairs. What shall we do if our lodgers should happen to call for something, and not a servant in the house? Ah, quelle horreur!"

Her fears were realised. There was a gentle knock at the door of the room where they sat. Madame Bairdon rose, gave a hasty touch of adjustment to her coiffure, always fresh and graceful, and opened it.

The English "milord" spoke with deliberation and with an air of constraint, natural to one who translates his thoughts from another tongue.

"Pardon, madame. My preceptor, that is to say, M. le Professeur—is indisposed. Would mademoiselle your daughter be so very good as to make a tisane for him?"

Griselle had scarcely time to think the request extraordinary or impertinent, ere a cry rang through the house from garret to basement—"Gustave!" She hurried to the door, and saw the tall bearded youth clasp his mother to his heart in a long embrace. Then she heard Madame Bairdon's faint, agitated words, "My son Gustave! But Gerard—where?"

"Here, to speak for himself," Gustave said. For another step was on the stairs, another form drew near.

And Griselle was just conscious, amidst the darkness that suddenly surrounded her, and the strange sounds that filled her ears, of a face dreamed of night and day bending over her, a voice whispering words too sacred to be breathed aloud.

"Thy father and Henri," said Madame Bairdon presently, starting at the sound of a well-known knock at the street door. How long was it since they had gone out? An hour? A day? A lifetime? She went down, opened the door, and led her husband up to the entresol, pouring into his ear a thousand voluble, half-understood explanations.

"Father, embrace thy son," she said. "He was dead and is alive."

The stately Scotchman folded his son in his strong arms—kissed him—wept over him.

"He *was* dead—but not as the prodigal," were the first words he spoke. "I am proud of my noble son, who has done his *devoir* well."

"Father, here is another son for thee," said Gustave, drawing Gerard forward.

"—Who would have filled a nameless grave in the court of the Bastille, but for his more than brother," Gerard added.

"My opinion is," said Madame Bairdon through her tears, "that before we begin to praise and thank one another, we ought to praise and thank the good God."

"You say well, mother," Gerard responded. "'Let those give thanks whom the Lord hath redeemed, and delivered from the hand of the enemy.'"

"Amen!" Gustave added.

This thanksgiving from the lips of Gerard, which was also a confession of faith, filled Griselle's cup of joy to overflowing.

Afterwards they talked together. "You have escaped from prison," Madame Bairdon said. "If you had been

set at liberty, you would not have come hither in this strange disguise. How did you ever think of it?"

"The plan was mine," Gustave answered. "The prestige of an English milord is a grand protection; and my knowledge of the language fits me admirably for the rôle, while the quiet, scholarly Gerard makes a capital tutor, just a few years older than his pupil."

"Tell us in what manner you contrived to break your bonds," asked M. Bairdon.

Gerard answered, "We owe our freedom to kind and true friends who never ceased to think of us, and to toil for us." Then producing an étui of perfumed morocco, much worn and faded, he added, with a glance at Griselle, "The kind hands in which I left this 'gage,' in exchange for the new purse they wrought for me ere I went to M. Pelletier, must have been the same that sent it back, with its precious contents."

Griselle blushed, and seemed about to speak, but the words died on her lips, and she glanced at Madame Bairdon, who smiled with an air of intelligence, but said nothing. At last M. Bairdon spoke, "We were all in the secret," he said; "but we could have done little, had not others of higher station and larger influence lent us their help."

"Imagine our joy," said Gustave, "when at length we were able to open and examine the little parcel M. Abadie placed in our hands on leaving the Bastille. The étui itself was like the face of a friend;—I shall not tell just now how Gerard welcomed it. We took out the two goodly 'rolls of a hundred louis,' duly wrapped and sealed; and with the morbid curiosity of prisoners who have so little to see, must needs open both at the same time. The contents of the first fell out readily on the table before us—a glittering golden shower. But those of the other perplexed and baffled us; for the louis d'or on the top seemed to have a singular objection to separate from its neighbours. At last we removed it, and found that it formed the lid of a little

circular box—so ingeniously contrived!—when we placed it beside the pile of gold coins it was meant to counterfeit we could scarcely tell the difference, yet it was large enough to contain *these*—which doubtless you know well.” He produced a knife blade, and a very small strong file without a handle.

“Oh, my father, no one but a captive can understand the rapture with which we seized them! When freedom is to be won, a man who has iron enough in his hands to file a bar never cries ‘Impossible!’ We were sent, I know not wherefore, to a dreary prison attached to a monastery in the south. Castelsarazin was the name of the hateful place. It was more comfortless than the Bastille; though by no means so strongly fortified. ‘Twere a long tale to describe our labours, our shifts, our hopes, fears, and disappointments. We filed the bars of our prison window, made ropes of our bed-covering and spare garments cut into strips; let ourselves down to the court, climbed the outer wall, and were free at last.”

“Free indeed, but far from safe,” said Madame Bairdon, repressing a shudder. “What did you do then?”

“Oh, then Gerard took the direction of matters into his own hand,” said Gustave, looking towards his friend.

“I went to my own people,” Gerard said—“and would to God I had done it long ago! We found shelter, protection, concealment, all that the truest friendship could give, with my kinsfolk, the Gentlemen Glass-makers of Foix.”

“Gentlemen Glass-makers!” Bairdon repeated in surprise.

“Yes,” cried Gustave eagerly. “Father, mother, only think—our Gerard is ‘gentilhomme.’” \*

A flush overspread Gerard’s pale face, and for a few

\* In Old France “gentilhomme” meant much more than “noble;” a man’s ancestors must have been noble for at least three generations, else he dared not assume that envied designation, of which the king himself was proud, considering it amongst his highest honours to be called “premier gentilhomme de France.”

moments he looked downcast, even sad. Then he said, turning to Bairdon, "Monsieur, had I been a true man, I might long ago have entreated your permission to give your daughter a name noble and stainless as any in your native land. But in my pride and folly I turned scornfully away from the proscribed, poverty-stricken race, with whom the memories of my childhood were associated. I remembered my father only as a poor artizan, whose name would disgrace me in the salons of Paris. And all the while that name, though I knew it not, was a noble one. Thus, while I gloried in my shame, my rejection of God and His Truth, I was ashamed of that which should have been my glory."

"We value you for your own sake, M. Gerard," Bairdon said. "We have always done so. Nevertheless, I own I have no objection to gentle birth and long descent. I admire that proverb of my adopted country, 'Noblesse oblige.'"

"Gerard's 'noblesse' is four centuries old," Gustave explained with pride and satisfaction. "He is a Grenier of Foix, one of that family of Gentlemen Glass-makers who were ennobled in the fourteenth century by Charles VII. Notwithstanding their poverty, their rights are uncontested by friend or foe. You remember that the three Greniers—the young men who were put to death with the Protestant pastor Rochette—were allowed to die by the axe, without 'amende honorable' or indignity of any kind, just as if they had been princes of the blood."\*

"So, even if I were retaken—" Gerard began with a smile.

"Oh, hush!" cried Madame Bairdon. "How can you speak thus, even in jest? Then, M. Gerard"—with a little hesitation—"I suppose you are a Protestant?"

Gerard glanced around the group, but his eye rested on the face of Griselle, as he said firmly, "I hold the name of Protestant more dear than that of gentilhomme."

"Ah, well! Your fathers were all of 'the Religion,'" said Madame Bairdon apologetically and rather dolefully.

\* A fact.

"My fathers were men who chose to die rather than say the thing they did not believe," Gerard answered.

"And you, M. Gerard,"—for the first time Griselle's gentle voice was heard,—“you believe in God? Nay, more—you believe in the Cross, and in what was done there for us all?”

“I do, from the depths of my heart.”

“Then, I think, you may live faithfully and die joyfully without priest or sacrament, as *one* died whose memory is precious to us all—dear Father Goudin.”

“I think with you, my daughter,” said Bairdon. “I belonged for half my life to the Church of Scotland. And though, for my own part, I have returned to Catholic Unity, I do not see, in this difference of creed, anything that need change the position of M. Désiré Gerard towards us, since he brings back to us an unchanged heart.”

“The heart of Désiré Gerard Grenier de Montalte must cease to beat,” Gerard answered with emotion, “ere it could change to those friends to whom he owes life and liberty, and the love that makes them precious. And yet,” he added after a pause, “he to whom so much has been given dares to ask still more——”

Bairdon smiled, though a tear glistened in his eye as he looked at Griselle. “I understand you, my son,” he said. “But have patience, and all will be well. What think you of a journey to my native land?”

Here Madame Bairdon interposed, and said something in a low voice about “prudence and discretion.”

And then a quiet festive calm stole over all. The re-united family ate and drank together, and talked of the future and the past; nor were the two dear ones forgotten who were that day keeping, in another place, no superstitious “Fête-Dieu,” but the true feast of God.

At an early hour one morning, about a fortnight afterwards, a simple but solemn marriage service was performed in the chapel of the English Embassy. Secrecy and haste were necessary, for the bridegroom’s position was one of

peculiar danger, and his departure from Paris and from France could not longer be delayed with safety. Amongst the few who were present by invitation, when Bairdon of Glenmair gave the hand of his daughter to Désiré Gerard Grenier de Montalte, was Gerard's old friend M. Jules Prosper. After the ceremony he overwhelmed the bride with compliments, and gave her a handsome keepsake, a brooch à la Grecque. Then turning to Gerard, he asked with an abrupt simplicity which, with him, was the strongest sign of genuine feeling, "As for thee, my friend, where wilt thou go, and what wilt thou do now?"

"We go first to Holland, kindly aided by M. Delabroue, the chaplain of the Dutch Ambassador, who has given us letters of introduction to persons of distinction there. And then we hope to visit Scotland. My wife must needs show me and our brother Gustave the purple hills of her native land. Moreover, since the Peace, M. Bairdon has received communications from friends at home. The property he possessed in his own right is, they fear, irrecoverably lost, nor would his presence in Scotland be desirable, or safe, even now. But an estate belonging to the family of his late wife might be claimed for Griselle, as her grandfather's sole surviving heir. I go to make the claim; and Gustave will be useful also. He wishes afterwards to study at an English university. While, as for me, I long to return to my art. I am Gerard the musician once more; and with joy and gladness now. For, Prosper, I have found the keynote of art, and of life. We go forth safe and happy, because we go—'in the shadow of God.'"

THE END.

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